PPMC MAGAZINE

SOUTH AFRICA

PHOTOGRAPHY, PAGEANTRY, MODELING AND COMPETITIONS

Faeem Karodia

Carlè Melville

Tshiama Siga

Talisa Naidoo

Rochelle Morgan

Nothando Sikhonde

Issue 169

Featuring **National & International** *Models*

Cover Model

Giverny Venter

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Mister Deaf International 2025

#Pageant

Interview with Faeem Karodia

Mister Deaf International 2025

Faeem Karodia stands as the new Mister Deaf International 2025, a title he earned in the Philippines earlier this year. For the 40-year-old from Actonville, Benoni, the crown carries deep personal meaning. “It means to advocate for Deaf communities all over the world to get equality, accessibility, humanitarian support, and empowerment,” he says.

His path to the international stage began after he won Mr. Deaf South Africa in 2024. Faeem felt uncertain at first about which global pageant to enter—Mister Deaf Universe or Mister Deaf International. He researched both organisations, spoke with past winners from South Africa who had competed in previous years, and watched YouTube videos of earlier pageants. In the end, he chose Mister Deaf International.

Preparation proved demanding. Faeem sought sponsorships and support from his community, describing the process as a “roller-coaster experience.” One constant guide was his close friend Tashreeqah Khan, who offered advice every step of the way after he decided to compete.

He trained in model walking every Sunday with Mervin Coaching, sessions that boosted his confidence and made him proud to represent South Africa. His mother provided crucial support, helping him select outfits for the pageant. Much of the journey he handled alone, funding his flight and wardrobe himself.

The biggest hurdle came with sponsorships. Faeem approached businesses for help, but found little interest. “No one was interested or inspired by my journey,” he recalls. Only his close friends and family stepped up. To push through, he prayed daily, asking God for guidance and miracles. “It does answer some days, which I really appreciate,” he says. “I believe that prayer is powerful.”

Growing up in the Deaf community shaped Faeem profoundly. He expresses deep gratitude for the support he received from others who believed in his dreams and goals. “It helps me become more confident and strong, and it gets me more involved in the Deaf community,” he explains. Sharing South African Sign Language and culture strengthened his sense of identity.

On the global platform, representation matters greatly to Faeem. He sees it as a way to empower Deaf communities through education, job opportunities, and equal access. The title allows him to show “not only their unique talents, intellect, and beauty but their overall personal and humanitarian goals.”

Faeem plans to use his reign actively. He intends to attend Deaf events, visit schools across South Africa, and join workshops and conferences on Deaf issues. Collaboration stands central to his approach—he aims to work with government and private businesses to find solutions. “We have quite a lot of Deaf leaders from organisations who will participate in the journey,” he notes. “I will definitely work with them.”

His core message to the world is straightforward: “We, Deaf people, are human beings like everyone else. We do everything a normal person does except hear.” He urges people to enter the Deaf world, learn Sign Language, and understand Deaf rights, culture, identity, daily barriers, and values. For young Deaf boys who now look up to him, Faeem offers clear advice: “Be yourself and believe in yourself. Follow your heart, dreams, and goals. Have lots of patience, self-respect, and self-discipline.”

One moment from the competition stays etched in his memory. After four years of entering Deaf pageants since 2021 without winning nationally until 2024, the international victory felt monumental. The most unforgettable part came during the cruise White Party, when he wore the sash and crown as Mister Deaf International 2025. “It felt like I conquered the world—I’m king,” he says, laughing. Sign language awareness remains vital for inclusion. “It is very important for people to know and understand Sign Language because it is the Deaf language and form of communication,” Faeem stresses. It helps Deaf people access information everywhere and builds a bridge between hearing and Deaf individuals for true inclusion.

He wants changes in entertainment and modelling too—interpreters on set or people who know Sign Language to make opportunities more accessible and fair for Deaf participants. Hearing communities can help by getting involved, interacting with Deaf people, and learning about their world to work together. “It will definitely empower Deaf people to shape better lifestyles ahead,” he says.

During his reign, Faeem plans to launch a project empowering Deaf individuals to start their own businesses, drawing from his experience as a self-employed pastry chef working from home. He hopes it attracts support from local communities, government, and private businesses.

Looking further ahead, Faeem dreams of travelling the world to meet more Deaf people and becoming a well-known Deaf content creator. If he had to sum up his journey in one sentence, it would be this: “Never give up on your dreams. It’s your dreams, not theirs.”

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Rochelle Morgan

PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 169

Pageant Finalist Inspiring Women To Rise

#Pageant

Introducing Rochelle Morgan

Mrs Supranational South Africa 2026 Finalist

Rochelle Morgan beams with pride as she talks about her latest achievement. She has been selected as a finalist for Mrs Supranational South Africa 2026. "Thank you so much! When I received the news, I was honestly overwhelmed with gratitude and excitement," Rochelle says. "Being selected as a Mrs Supranational South Africa 2026 finalist is such an honour, and in that moment I just felt proud, humbled, and incredibly motivated."

Rochelle is no stranger to the world of pageantry. She owns Vogue Midrand Modelling School and serves as Co-Director of Miss Ebony SA Gauteng. Over the years, she has collected several titles, including Mrs Gauteng. Now, as a finalist in this national competition, she stands among a group of strong women vying for the chance to represent South Africa internationally.

She is also a mother to two children who have made their own marks in pageantry. "I am a proud mother to two remarkable titleholders: Miss Teen SA and Mr King of SA and Northern Gauteng," Rochelle shares. Her family life intertwines closely with her career, and she credits her loved ones for keeping her steady.

Rochelle decided to enter Mrs Supranational South Africa because she wanted to push herself further. "Honestly… it was a mixture of purpose, healing, and a deep desire to step into something bigger than myself," she explains. "I've always believed that pageantry isn't just about beauty; it's about impact, confidence, leadership, and empowerment. And Mrs Supranational SA represents exactly that — women who rise, women who lead, and women who carry both strength and softness with pride."

For Rochelle, this platform offers more than a title. It provides a way to speak out and connect. "This platform gives me the opportunity to advocate for the things I care about, to connect with incredible women, and to embrace my own potential in a new and powerful way," she says. "To me, this platform is so much more than a competition — it's a voice, a responsibility, and a calling." Her main focus is promoting self-worth and the ability to rebuild after difficult times. "The message and cause I am most passionate about promoting through my journey is the power of self-worth, healing, and rediscovery — especially for women who have had to rebuild themselves," Rochelle states.

"I want to remind women that no matter what they've been through — whether it's overcoming trauma, starting over, losing themselves, or navigating silent battles — they are still worthy, still powerful, and still capable of rewriting their story."

The journey so far has brought personal growth. "This journey has stretched me, challenged me, and transformed me in ways I never expected," she notes. "Stepping into the Mrs Supranational South Africa competition pushed me far outside my comfort zone — and that's exactly where I found the version of myself I had been searching for."

Her biggest supporters are her family and friends. "Without a doubt — my family and friends. They are the heart behind every step I take," Rochelle says. "Their belief in me has been my anchor. Their encouragement has been my fuel."

Memorable moments include learning she was a finalist. "I'll never forget that feeling. I felt this wave of emotion — part disbelief, part gratitude, part pure, overwhelming joy," she recalls. Another highlight was winning the Lamborghini Wine Reel Challenge. "To be chosen by Lamborghini Wine themselves was surreal and to have it recognized by such an iconic luxury brand was a moment of pure pride," she adds.

Challenges have come up along the way, from self-doubt to balancing responsibilities. "One of the biggest challenges was overcoming the quiet voice in my head that sometimes questioned whether I was 'enough'," Rochelle admits. She overcame it by focusing on her purpose and surrounding herself with positive people. Juggling family, work, and pageant duties required careful planning and self-kindness.

Preparation for the competition is thorough and balanced. Rochelle works on mindset, public speaking, stage presence, content creation, physical wellness, and building connections with other finalists. "Every day I'm working on becoming the best, most authentic version of myself," she says.

She believes a strong titleholder needs authenticity, purpose-driven leadership, courage, consistency, and the ability to inspire. "A strong and inspiring titleholder is so much more than a crown and sash — she is a woman who embodies purpose, authenticity, and heart," Rochelle explains.

Balancing everything comes down to priorities. "I balance family, career, and pageant responsibilities through intentional planning, open communication, and clear priorities," she says. "My family comes first, and their support keeps me grounded."

To women considering pageants, Rochelle offers straightforward advice: "Do it with purpose and authenticity. Enter because you want to grow, not because you want to compare. Pageantry is a journey of confidence, self-discovery, and impact — but it requires hard work, commitment, and courage."

Looking forward, Rochelle hopes to make a real difference. "My dream is to use this platform to create real impact. I want to inspire women who are rebuilding their confidence, stepping into new seasons, or rediscovering their worth," she says. "If I am blessed with the title, I would also have the extraordinary honour of representing South Africa on an international stage — and that is a responsibility I would carry with immense pride."

For Rochelle, this is about more than personal success. It is about showing others they matter and can achieve great things. Her journey continues to unfold with determination and heart.

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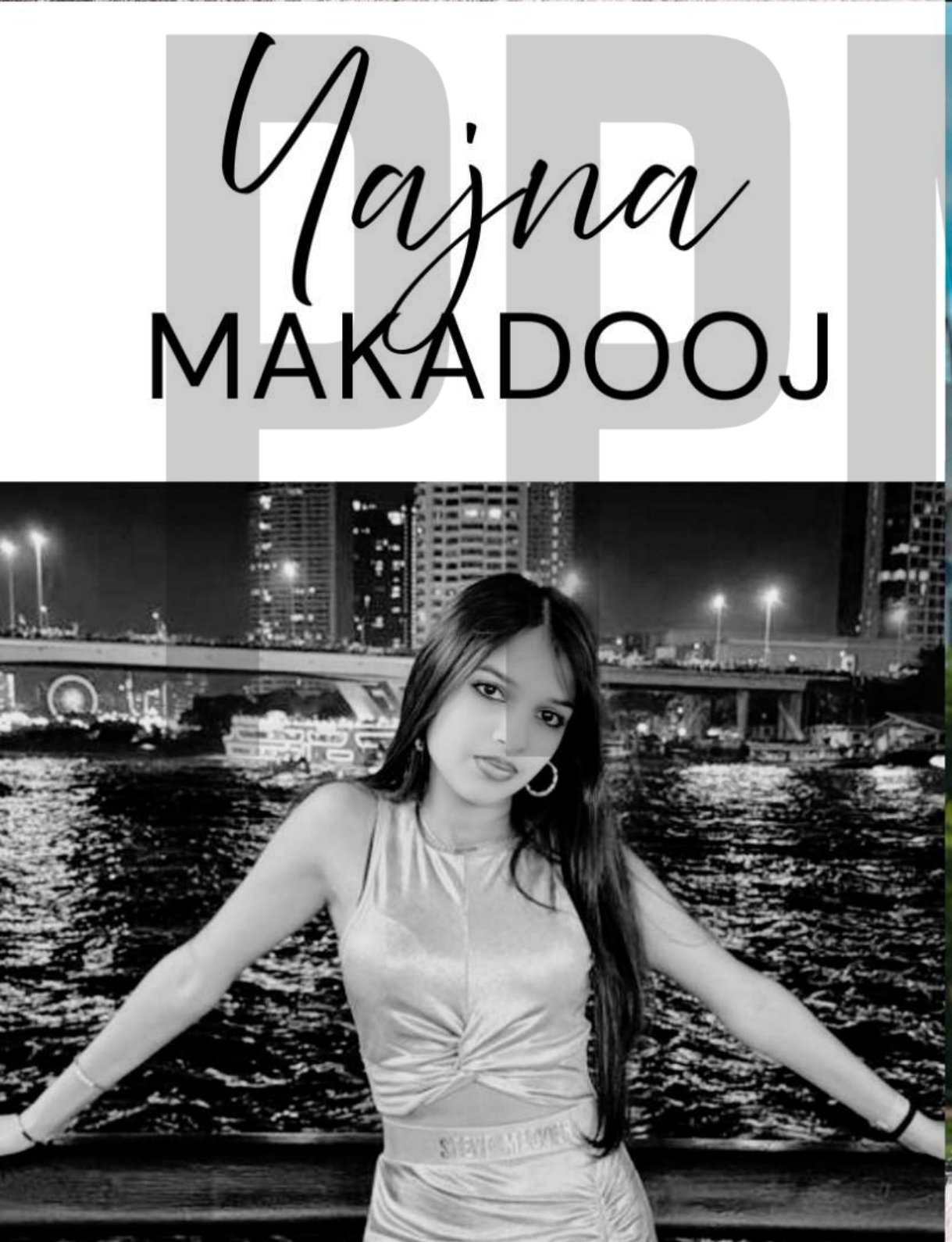
Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition

Yajna MAKADOOJ



#Finalist

Interview with Yajna Makadooj

Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition

When the opportunity to enter the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition appeared, it was not something Yajna Makadooj had planned. The idea came unexpectedly through someone who has always believed in her the most — her mother. What started as a simple suggestion soon turned into an exciting personal challenge and a chance for Yajna to explore a new path.

Yajna explains that the moment began quite casually. “My mum stumbled upon the post advertising for a Cover Star 2026 and threw the idea of me entering the competition straight away,” Yajna says. At first, the idea felt surprising. She admits that she had never taken part in a competition of this level before. Still, something about the suggestion stayed with her and made her think more seriously about it.

“I must say I have never taken part in a competition of this calibre,” Yajna says honestly. “But what made me give it a thought is my self-confidence and trust in myself to push the boundaries to see where I could see myself in the future.”

That thought quickly grew into something bigger. Entering the competition sparked a new possibility in her mind. “Maybe being a future face or model then became a light-bulb moment in the making for me,” Yajna explains. What began as curiosity slowly turned into motivation, and Yajna decided to take the step and enter.

When Yajna later received the news that she had been selected as a finalist, the feeling was difficult to describe. Like many first-time contestants, she did not expect the announcement so soon. “It definitely caught me by surprise,” Yajna says. “But I knew then and now that I do have the capability and confidence of possibly putting myself out there.”

For Yajna, being photogenic is about much more than just looking good in front of a camera. She believes it is connected to personality and the energy a person brings into a photo. “To me, being photogenic means being a bright personality that brings sunshine to any picture,” Yajna explains.

Although Yajna has not yet had many professional photoshoots, she already feels comfortable in front of the lens. Most of her experience so far has come from family photoshoots, but those moments helped her discover something about herself. “I must have only done a few family photoshoots,” Yajna says, “but I’m actually a natural in front of the camera.”

Yajna admits that walking in front of a crowd to model is something she has not experienced yet, but she is excited about the possibility. “I hope I’m given that chance to do professional photoshoots,” she adds.

What Yajna believes truly sets her apart in the competition is a combination of qualities she has built over time. Confidence plays a big role, but she also values determination and a strong willingness to grow. “I feel I have the self-confidence, the ambition, drive, not to forget the personality and eagerness to learn that sets me apart,” Yajna says.

For Yajna, confidence is one of the most important qualities anyone entering the modelling world needs. She believes it is the foundation that helps a person step forward and take opportunities when they appear. “Confidence as well as positive self-esteem is one of the most important traits that one needs when wanting to be a model,” Yajna explains. Winning the competition would be an incredible moment for Yajna, but she says it would also be a moment of personal pride. Achieving something she once doubted would prove that determination can lead to success. “I would definitely be surprised at myself,” Yajna says with a smile. “But I would also be the proudest one, because if someone sets her mind to it, anything can be achieved.”

If Yajna had to describe herself in only three words, she keeps it simple and honest: “Natural, photogenic, simple.”

As the competition continues, Yajna is approaching the journey with a calm and positive attitude. While she hopes for a great outcome, she is also focused on enjoying the experience and learning along the way. “I am taking this competition in my stride,” Yajna says. “I remain confident and positive in whatever outcome I receive but live with the hope that I meet the requirements of being a cover model for the magazine.”

Behind Yajna every step of the way is the person who first suggested the idea — her mother. Yajna says her support has meant everything. “My mum has been my biggest supporter, pushing me to do my absolute best,” Yajna says. “For this I truly appreciate her.”

If Yajna were to win and gain a larger platform, she already knows how she would want to use that opportunity. Growing up, she learned the importance of helping others without expecting anything in return, and that lesson continues to guide her today.

“I have grown up learning to give and share without expecting anything back,” Yajna explains. “If I have to win, I would use this platform to help others, especially our elderly and children who are abused or neglected by their own family.” For Yajna, the message she wants to share is simple but meaningful. “We must show love and kindness to everyone,” Yajna says.

Photo credit: Kimeshan Govender Photography

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Juliette Centaine East

PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 169

Surprise Entry Leads To Big Opportunity

#Finalist

Meet Juliette Centaine East

Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition

When Juliette found out she had been entered into the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition, it came as a complete surprise. The Grade 11 learner had no idea that her journey into the competition had already begun behind the scenes, thanks to someone very close to her.

Juliette recalls the moment clearly. “I had no idea that my mom entered me into this competition until she burst into my bedroom, buzzing with excitement,” she says. “She announced that I was a finalist for a magazine cover competition.”

The unexpected news left her momentarily speechless. “I was completely taken aback. At first I was lost for words. I didn’t really understand what she was saying,” Juliette explains. Once the excitement settled, her mom explained the details, and Juliette began to realise just how big the opportunity was.

Being selected as a contestant by SA Beauty Modelling Academy was another moment that caught Juliette off guard. “I felt overwhelmed, especially since I was completely in the dark about my mom’s entry,” she admits. “Honestly, I was also a bit annoyed that I hadn’t known about it sooner.”

Despite the surprise start, Juliette has approached the experience with an open mind and a strong sense of self. When asked what being photogenic means to her, she offers a thoughtful perspective. “The idea that being photogenic defines someone’s attractiveness is, in my opinion, a shallow stereotype,” Juliette says. “I find that to be untrue and it holds little importance to me.” Rather than focusing on appearances alone, Juliette believes authenticity and confidence are far more meaningful qualities.

Since she is still new to professional modelling, preparing for photoshoots is a learning process. Juliette draws inspiration from her experience performing on stage. “To be honest, I don’t have a ton of experience in front of the camera since I’ve never done professional photo shoots,” she explains. “However, I’ve performed on stage a few times. Whenever I do, I remind myself that my love for performing is what truly matters.”

Juliette believes her authenticity is one of the things that sets her apart from other contestants. Her entry into the competition was completely unexpected, and she says that allowed her to approach the experience without overthinking it. “I wasn’t aware that I was entered into this competition, so I went into it spontaneously and as my most authentic self,” she says.

Confidence, she believes, is one of the most important qualities any person can develop, whether they are entering a competition or simply navigating everyday life. “I believe confidence is crucial, not just for this competition, but in everything we do in life,” Juliette says. “Not everyone feels confident in every situation, and that’s perfectly fine. What matters is that you keep pushing yourself to try new things.”

She explains that stepping outside your comfort zone is often where the most growth happens. “This persistence will help build your confidence and prepare you for all life’s challenges,” she adds.

While the idea of appearing on the cover of PPMC Magazine South Africa would certainly be exciting, Juliette keeps a healthy perspective about what it means. “It would be a great opportunity for my future,” she says. “But whether or not I make it onto a magazine cover doesn’t impact my self-worth, and others shouldn’t let it dictate theirs either.”

When asked to describe her personal modelling style, Juliette keeps it simple. “Fun, authentic, and natural,” she says. Because her modelling journey is only just beginning, Juliette reflects more on her stage experience when speaking about challenges she has faced. “I might have to reflect on my experiences on stage rather than a modelling journey,” she says. “I believe that it is vital to embrace the unexpected, like being cast in a role different from what I initially auditioned for.” She explains that adaptability is a valuable skill in any creative space. “You just go with it and make it work,” Juliette says. “This is where confidence shines through, stepping out of your comfort zone, stepping into character, and ultimately earning the biggest applause.”

With prizes and a major title at stake in the competition, some contestants might feel pressure. Juliette says she manages it by staying aware of her emotions and prioritising her mental wellbeing. “I always stay aware of my feelings and put mental wellbeing first,” she says. “I do however enjoy a bit of pressure to keep me going.”

Throughout this journey, one person has stood firmly in her corner. “It has to be my mom,” Juliette says when asked about her biggest supporter.

Looking ahead, Juliette says the possibility of winning still feels surreal. However, she is open to the opportunities that could come from it. “The possibility of winning feels surreal, but if I were to take home the title, I will eagerly explore the opportunities that follow,” she says. “The chance to step into a new platform and possibly follow a career path would be exciting.”

Outside of the competition, Juliette leads a busy and well-rounded life. She is currently in Grade 11 and serves as an active member of her school’s Student Representative Council. “I am proud to say I did well in my IGCSE exams last year,” Juliette shares. “I am currently also preparing for my International Cecchetti ballet exam and play the violin.”

Her creative interests also extend to the stage, where she has taken part in several school productions. “I take pride in being a well-rounded individual with a positive outlook on life,” Juliette says. With her grounded attitude, creative talents, and honest approach, Juliette is embracing this unexpected opportunity in her own authentic way.

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Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Finalist

Rachel Lechtman

COMPETITOR
Registration
Pending

#Model

Interview with Rachel Lechtman

Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition

Rachel is one of the contestants hoping to make a strong impression in the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition, and for her the journey is about more than just standing in front of a camera. It is about creativity, confidence, and using her voice to remind people that everyone deserves to be seen.

Rachel explains that her decision to enter the competition came from a deep love for modeling and self-expression. “I decided to enter the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition because modeling allows me to express creativity while also building confidence,” Rachel says. She believes the competition offers more than just a title.

For her, it represents an opportunity to grow and to challenge herself in new ways. “This competition felt like an exciting opportunity to grow, challenge myself, and use my platform to remind people that everyone deserves to be seen and heard, no matter their background,” Rachel adds.

Being selected as a contestant by SA Beauty Modeling Academy was a special moment for her. Rachel remembers feeling both proud and thankful when she received the news. “When I found out that I had been selected as a contestant by SA Beauty Modeling Academy, I felt incredibly grateful and excited,” Rachel says.

She sees the opportunity as something that pushes her to improve and give her best effort every day. “Being chosen to represent something like this is such an honour, and it motivated me to work even harder and keep pushing myself to improve,” Rachel explains.

For Rachel, the idea of being photogenic goes far beyond appearance. She believes the real magic of a photograph comes from emotion and authenticity. “For me, being photogenic is not just about looking good in a photo,” Rachel says. “It’s about capturing emotion and personality through the camera.” She explains that a strong image should tell a story and connect with the person looking at it. “A strong photo should make people feel something and show a glimpse of who you truly are,” Rachel adds.

Preparing for a photoshoot is something Rachel takes seriously, but she also believes in keeping the process enjoyable. She spends time thinking about the mood she wants to create and how she wants the final images to feel. “Before a photoshoot, I like to prepare by thinking about the mood or style I want to create,” Rachel explains.

She also focuses on staying calm and positive before stepping in front of the camera. “I try to stay relaxed and positive so I can enjoy the moment. When you feel comfortable and confident, it naturally reflects in the photos,” Rachel says.

Rachel believes her creativity helps her stand out in a competition filled with talented contestants. She enjoys exploring different looks and expressions in every photoshoot. “Something that sets me apart is my creativity and the way I try to bring different emotions and expressions into my photos,” Rachel says. She likes to experiment and push herself to create images that feel fresh and unique. “I enjoy experimenting with poses and making each photo feel unique and memorable,” Rachel adds.

Confidence plays a major role in any modeling competition, especially one that could lead to appearing on the cover of a magazine. Rachel believes that confidence allows a model’s personality to shine through the lens. She says that when someone truly believes in themselves, it changes the way they carry themselves and the energy they bring to a shoot.

The thought of seeing her own face on the cover of PPMC Magazine South Africa is something Rachel describes as both exciting and meaningful. She says it would be a proud moment and a reminder that hard work and dedication can open doors to new opportunities. When asked to describe her personal modeling style in three words, Rachel says it reflects creativity, confidence, and expression. She believes these qualities help her tell stories through photographs and connect with people who see her work. Like many people in the modeling industry, Rachel has also faced challenges along the way. Building confidence and learning to believe in herself has been part of the journey. She explains that every challenge became a chance to grow and improve, helping her become stronger and more determined.

Competing for a title that includes cash prizes and national recognition can bring pressure, but Rachel tries to stay focused on enjoying the experience. She believes the best results come when you stay calm, trust your preparation, and remember why you started. Rachel says the support she has received along the way has made a big difference. Encouragement from the people around her continues to motivate her to keep working toward her goals and pushing herself further in the competition.

Looking ahead, Rachel says that winning the overall title would be a powerful opportunity. She hopes to use the platform to continue promoting confidence and reminding others that every person has value and a voice that deserves to be heard. For Rachel, the journey in the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition is not just about a crown or a cover. It is about growth, creativity, and inspiring others to believe in themselves while pursuing their dreams.

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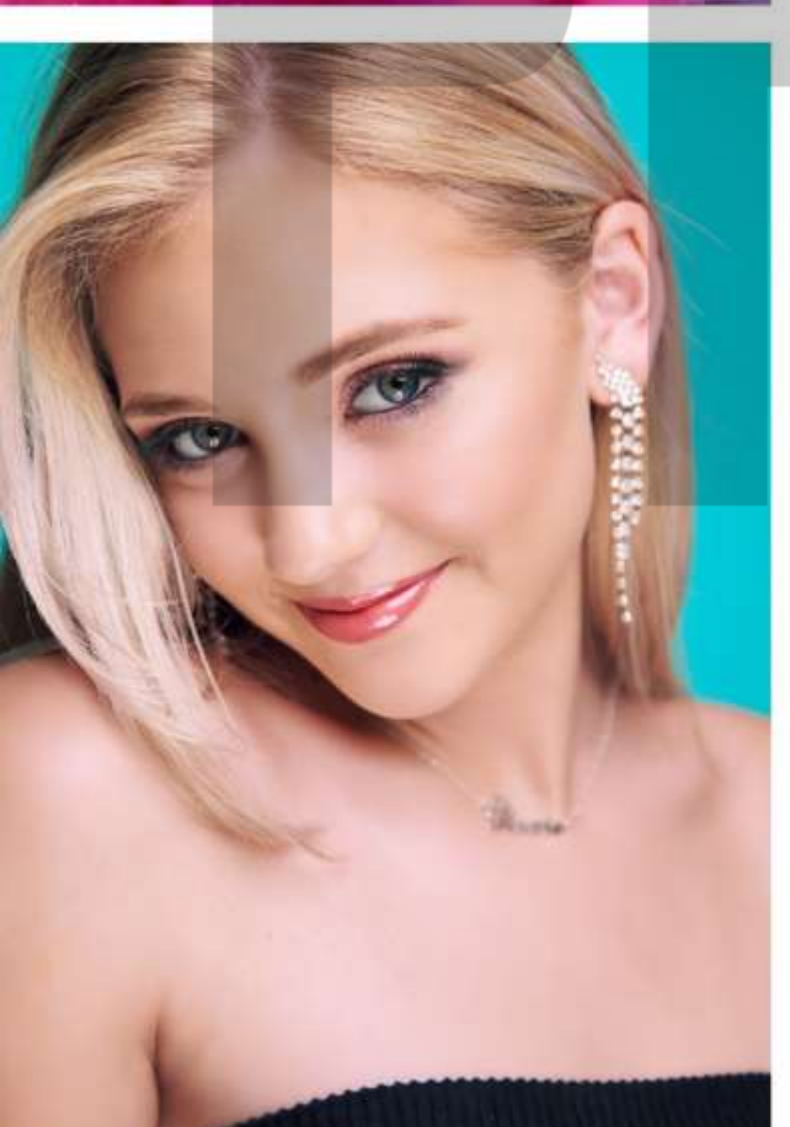
Rosie Venter

MISS PRE-TEEN UNIVERSE
SOUTH AFRICA 2025



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#Pageant

Interview with Rosie Venter

Miss Pre-Teen Universe South Africa 2025

Rosie Venter still remembers the moment her name was called as the winner of Miss Pre-Teen Universe South Africa 2025. "When I stood there and the crowd called my name, I was so shocked," she says. "It felt like everything just stood still and the next moment I heard the announcer called my name, and for a second the whole crowd was quiet and then the next moment I just felt my tears run down my face. It was a moment I will never forget."

The 14-year-old from Mossel Bay, a small town on South Africa's Garden Route, was crowned at a national gala in Limpopo. What started as a personal win quickly turned into something bigger for Rosie. At first, the crown felt like a personal achievement, but now it carries more weight.

"Winning Miss Pre-Teen Universe SA was an unforgettable moment, but the feelings of the title has grown into something much bigger since then," she explains. "At first, the crown felt like a personal achievement, but now it feels like a responsibility and a purpose."

Today, when Rosie wears her crown, she thinks beyond herself. "Now when I wear my crown I don't just think about the moment I won, but I think about the girls who are gaining confidence, learning to believe in themselves, and realising that kindness and positivity are strength," she says. "The title is no longer only mine, it belongs to every girl who chooses to live out the PINK values and share them with the world."

That mindset drives her PINK Out Loud campaign, which she started as a finalist in the pageant. The name PINK stands for Positive, Innocent, Natural, and Kind. "P for Positive (to always be positive, no matter what)," Rosie explains. "I for Innocent (to always stay innocent... you don't need to do those things to be cool). N for Natural (by natural I try to convince the girls to stop using all these filters... Jesus made all of us exactly beautiful in our own unique way). K for Kind – the one thing in life that might just save that one friend on the edge just by being kind."

The campaign began in her hometown of Garden Route, where she wanted to help girls in her community. "We had a task to start a campaign, but I didn't just want a campaign name behind it," she says. "So, I came up with a name for something and have a meaningful meaning behind it, and to help other girls."

Over the past year and a half, Rosie has given out school shoes, accessories, and encouragement to girls in need. One story stands out: a visit to a special school where she shared kind words. "One touching story of Pink Out Loud I had was I went to them for a bit of encouraging words," she recalls. "The girls couldn't stop speaking how they want to follow their dreams and that I was their role model... even if it was just a little bit I gave some little girl some hope. That to me was so special."

Rosie also launched her own perfume called PINK to support the campaign. "Launching my own perfume PINK was something very special to me because I wanted to have something meaningful that people would enjoy everyday, and it could also fund my campaign and spread the message at the same time," she says. Working with Tarina from Tarina's Perfumery, she created a scent that captures the feeling. "If you smell the perfume you can almost smell pink... The scent of pink make you feel confident, innocent and uplifted all at the same time. Every bottle I sell contributes to spreading positivity, innocence and kindness."

Balancing it all is no easy task. School remains her top priority. "School will always be my first responsibility as education is very important," Rosie notes. She plans her time carefully to handle homework, events, the campaign, and her perfume brand. "I also make sure to stay organised and focus on one task at a time. Having supportive parents and mentors who help me has also made a big difference."

What keeps her going is simple. "What keeps me motivated is remembering why I started my campaign and how hard I have worked to be where I am today," she says. The biggest lesson she wants to share? "The biggest lesson about determination that I would share with other young girls is that big dreams require commitment, patience and courage. You don't have to be perfect, but you must believe in yourself and keep moving forward. I want girls to know that their age does not limit their ability to make a difference."

Looking ahead, Rosie's dreams are growing. "Now that I am Miss Pre-Teen Universe South Africa 2025... my next chapter I'm dreaming about is for Pink Out Loud with Rosie growing so it can reach all girls not only over South Africa but worldwide," she says. She wants to visit more schools, host workshops, and share the message. "I want every girl to know the meaning behind Pink Out Loud, and not just to know the meaning but to live by it day by day."

Her hope is clear. "My hope for this coming year is for Pink Out Loud to become more than just me, that it becomes a message carried by girls everywhere, who are proud to be positive, innocent, natural and kind. Because the most powerful thing a girl can be is herself."

If she could give one piece of advice from her journey? "Don't rush growing up, your childhood is something beautiful," Rosie says. "The world sometimes wants young girls to feel that they have to grow up quickly, or look a certain way, or act older than they are, but the truth is being young, joyful, curious and kind is something very special.

There is strength in staying true to who you are. Be proud of who you are right now, laugh loudly, dream big, and be kind to one another."

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Mr. Gay World Tourism 2025

#Pageant

Introducing Gert Claassen-Smit

Newly Crowned Mr. Gay World Tourism 2025

Gert Claassen-Smit stands tall as the newly crowned Mr Gay World Tourism 2025, a title that marks a significant milestone in his journey of advocacy and representation. When asked how it felt to win the crown, Gert shared, “It was one of those moments made up of confusion, excitement and bringing what you have worked so hard for to a close. It was a moment where I stood proud to represent my country and was able to bring home a crown.”

Gert’s path to this international stage began closer to home. As Mr Gaynation SA 2024, he decided to step up. “Being Mr Gaynation SA 2024, I wanted to take on something international that can amplify my voice and the advocacies I represent and make an international impact for the causes I represent from equality for the LGBTQIA+ to stopping of GBV,” he explained.

For Gert, representing the LGBTQ+ community on a global platform carries deep meaning. “It means being able to stand up for those who are still living in darkness due to not being safe for them to come out,” he said. “I can be loud for them, I can create awareness for my community, and I can work on an international level to not only create safe spaces but also educate people that does not understand.”

He plans to use his title to promote both tourism and inclusivity. “My hope for this title is to be more involved in community outreach, to be able to set up safe spaces across not only the country but also the world, to use all platforms to educate everyone on the LGBTQIA+ community, including dialogs with community centers, prides across the country,” Gert stated.

The road to the crown was not without hurdles. Gert admitted the biggest challenge came from within. “I have to say the most challenging part was self doubt when you arrive at the international competitions and meeting all these well established contestants that has all done such amazing work in their own countries,” he recalled. “Then there is this moment of over thinking that am I good enough.” He overcame it by leaning on his support network. “Talking to my support structure and just getting to see all those messages of good wishes sent to me just make you feel like you can overcome anything and you are enough and can make a huge difference.”

Balancing his personal life, work, and new responsibilities requires discipline. “Definitely having a good time keeping schedule does help and sticking to that schedule is the most important aspect of balance,” Gert said. “A time and place for everything and always remember to take care of your own mental health as you can't make a difference if your head is not in a great space.”

To young LGBTQ+ individuals worldwide, Gert offers heartfelt advice. “There might be moments of your life that you do believe no one understands you or you feel you don't belong,” he told them. “Just always remember there are safe spaces and people like you to reach out to and talk to that won't judge you that will keep you safe. Live life as authentic as you are, never change for anyone or put yourself in a box for anyone and most of all never apologize for who you are.”

In his role, Gert defines key qualities clearly. “Confidence in my role is being able to take a stand and talk up when you see injustice, fight for what you believe in and be a voice for the voiceless,” he said. On leadership, he added, “Leadership in my role is driven through accountability and unity of different communities to drive change and make a difference.” And authenticity? “Authenticity is just showing up time and time again just as you are to never apologize and also know it is okay to not always be okay.”

The most rewarding part of his journey so far has been simple yet profound. “Being able to just be me, all the messages of support and the ones reaching out for advice to be able to make a difference,” Gert reflected. “The most rewarding part is just being able to tell my own story.” Throughout it all, one person has stood by his side unwaveringly. “My biggest supporter has to be the love of my life my husband Morne Claassen-Smit,” Gert said with warmth. “From traveling all over with me, doing last minute shopping for things I forgot to just talking me through moments of self doubt, always ready to assist and even rally the troops for votes. My journey could not have been so amazing without him in my corner.”

Gert is determined to leave a lasting mark during his reign. “I want to give others the opportunity that I had, the opportunity to make your voice heard on a global scale,” he declared. He announced, “Finally kicking off Mr Gay World South-Africa entries are open and the winner will be traveling abroad to compete for the Mr Gay World title later this year.”

What makes a strong ambassador for tourism and LGBTQ+ advocacy? “Someone willing to stand up, be loud and proud and don't care what the world has to say about who you choose to love,” Gert answered. “Someone willing to make their voice count for those who can not speak up for themselves. Truly living their life as authentic as possible.”

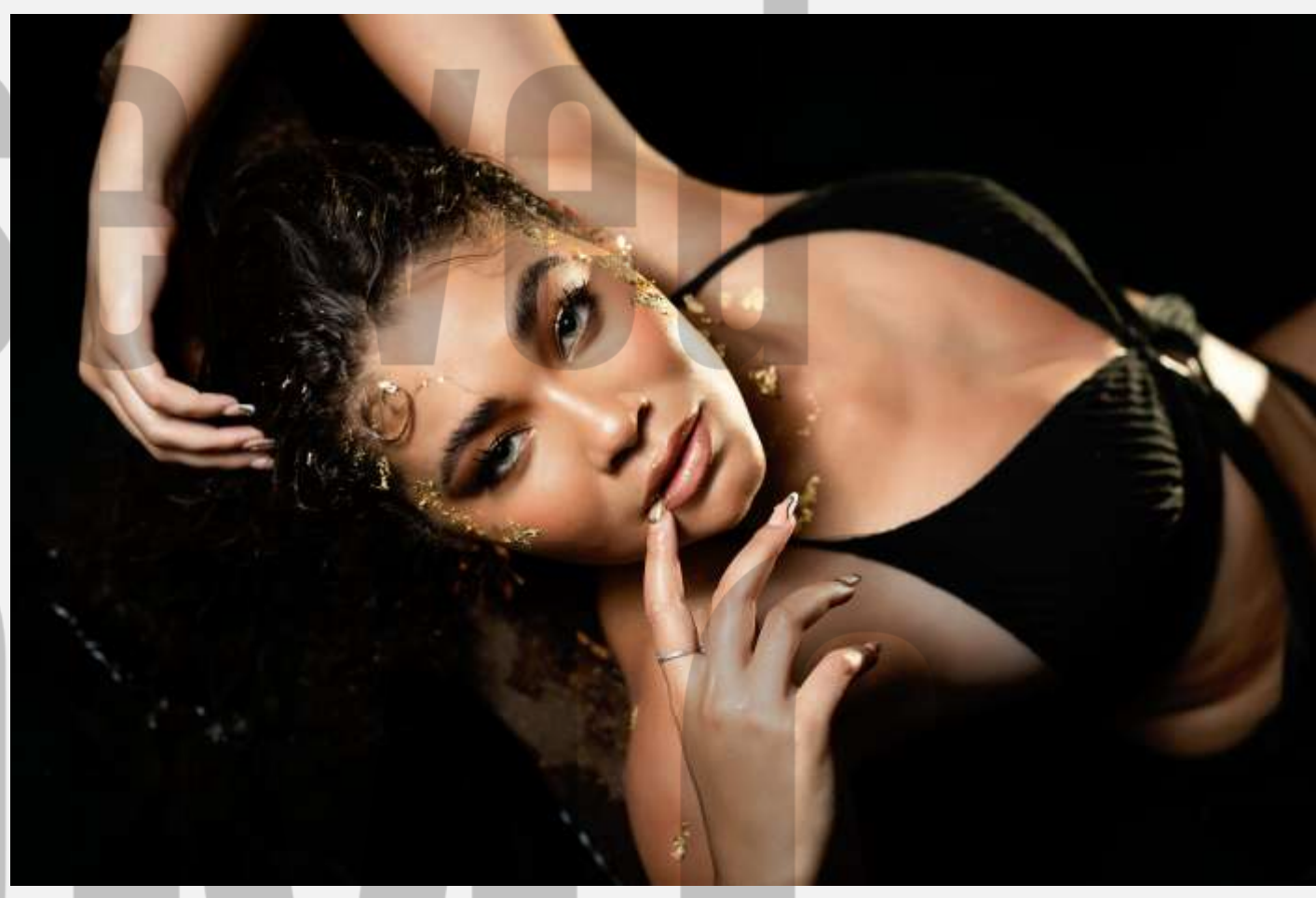
He handles public attention with grace. “Always with kindness and understanding that everyone has a story,” he said. “Listen and learn, people just want to be heard. I welcome anyone that wants to talk and believe in always staying humble.”

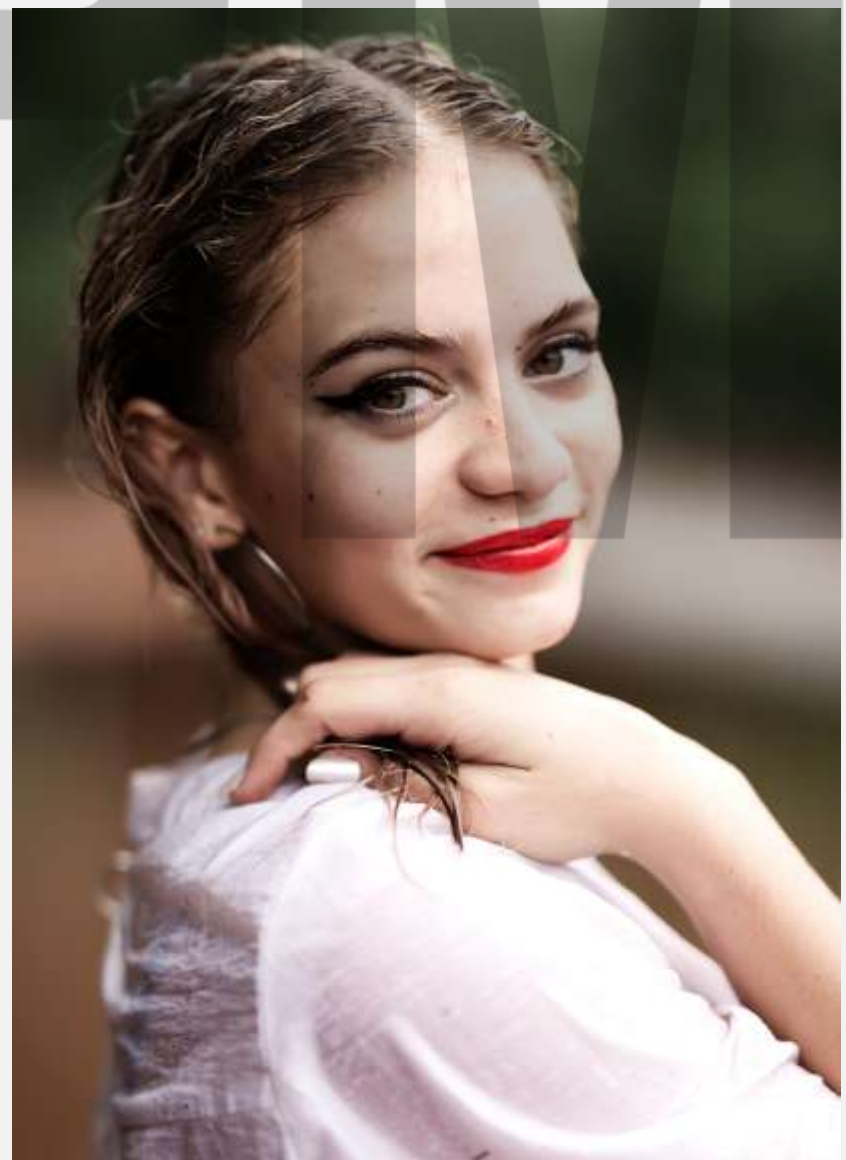
Looking to the future, Gert sees this title opening new doors. “Having the ability to do for others that I didn't have, bringing Mr Gay World to South Africa for future leaders to take this platform and make a difference,” he envisioned. “Shaping lives and minds that anything is possible just believe in yourself.”

Gert Claassen-Smit’s story is one of determination, love, and a commitment to creating a more inclusive world, one conversation and one safe space at a time.

Reserved

Sarelda Nel *Photography*





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#Phata

Interview with Sarelda Nel

From Forgotten Camera To Thriving Business

Sarelda Nel's love for photography shines through every image she creates. As the owner of Sarelda Nel Photography, she has built a business around her deep passion for capturing beauty in everyday moments. In a recent conversation, Sarelda opened up about her journey, sharing the steps that took her from a forgotten camera to running her own successful photography brand.

Sarelda's journey into photography began with a quiet wonder for the world. "I was always amazed at all the beauty around me and I always dreamed of being able to capture the beauty as I see it," she said. "Light falling just right on a puddle of water and transforming it into something so beautiful. I wanted to hold on to what I saw and I wanted to share the beauty." In 2016 she bought her first camera, but the technical details felt overwhelming and the camera gathered dust. Then, in 2018, life shifted when she discovered she was pregnant with her son, her rainbow baby.

"I decided this was my time. I quit my job because I wanted to be fully present with my son," Sarelda explained. She picked up the camera again to photograph his milestones, learning slowly through mistakes and small wins. "I taught myself slowly, step by step and one mistake at a time. I got frustrated because I didn't get the photos as I saw them in my head, but I got some pretty darn good ones as well." A mentor friend became a lifeline, answering endless questions and sharing videos. Sarelda remains grateful to her mentor and every photographer who offered guidance along the way.

That growing obsession soon led her to start Sarelda Nel Photography. "I couldn't think of anything else to do with my life anymore. I NEEDED to be a photographer," she recalled. She spent hours watching tutorials, spotting photoshoot possibilities in every location, even on vacation. "Photography is fuel to my soul," Sarelda said. With her husband's encouragement and support from close friends, she launched the business.

Her style is warm and full of life. "True to life color, with a bit of warmth and just a sprinkle of drama, that's how I see my style. I love color! All the colors! Pastels, deep earthy browns and greens. Color excites me," she said. Right now she finds herself torn between newborn photography and styled portraits as her favorites.

One session stands out above the rest: the "dancing in the rain" shoot. "It was raining and I just decided I had to do a shoot. All I saw was a white shirt, slick back hair and red lips," Sarelda remembered. Her assistant, a dancer, jumped in with no planning or budget. "It was the most fun I had in a long time. No pressure, no set outcome, we just went with it. And to me some of my best work."

Sarelda has a natural gift for helping clients relax. "Well I basically never stop talking. I always make jokes and I am not afraid of being silly to get a smile," she laughed. Her easygoing, slightly quirky personality puts people at ease. "Moms tend to relax when they see that I know kids and I work with them and not against them."

What sets her work apart is the friendly atmosphere she creates. "I strive to make my clients feel as if they just visited a friend. It is never just photos. I want people to enjoy their time with me," she said. To catch authentic emotions, she stays observant. "I observe my clients closely. I pay attention to what is being said during the session as well as what is happening around me while I take the photos. I tell jokes, or give scenarios to think about."

The road hasn't been smooth. Difficult clients taught her to set clear rules and contracts while staying respectful. Equipment failures—crashing hard drives and computers during busy seasons—brought stressful waits for data recovery. "I wanted to quit so many times, but the love and support of my husband and close friends pulled me back," Sarelda shared. Her husband stepped in during financial rough patches, and she learned from every problem. Self-doubt still creeps in. "I am still learning to deal with and manage the inevitable doubt that every creative person faces through the years. I still doubt myself some days."

Inspiration comes from everywhere. "Sometimes I wake up with an idea and then I write it down. Ideas come to me while I edit or paint too. I also draw a lot of my ideas or inspiration from my clients and their personalities," she said.

Photography became her true passion through many small moments. "I would go on vacation and see a beautiful spot and then just plan how I would do a shoot there. And then the feeling you get when you give memories to people that they can cherish forever," Sarelda reflected. "I knew, because I could not rest or think about anything else but growing and improving my photos."

She keeps her work fresh by painting, following photographers worldwide, and staying current with trends. Her advice to beginners is direct: "Take photos every day. Watch tutorials. Ask for help. Put money aside for failing equipment. Don't set your prices too low."

Balancing creativity and business is still tricky. "I still struggle with this… I would say you need clear boundaries especially when it comes to your time. Getting a studio management system is also a big help," she noted.

For the future, Sarelda has clear plans. "I would love to do at least 2 more styled shoots this year. My biggest dream is to specialize in a specific style and then grow with that. I would also love to help future photographers learn about photography and editing through me." With her genuine warmth and endless creativity, Sarelda continues to turn fleeting moments into lasting memories.

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Shavonne Smit

Instagram: @shavonnie08

#Finalist

Interview with Shavonne Smit

Miss Grand South Africa 2026 Finalist

Excitement and gratitude filled the moment when Shavonne Smit learned she had been selected as a finalist for Miss Grand South Africa 2026. For Shavonne, it was the start of a journey she had been thinking about for years. “I felt incredibly thrilled when I received the news,” she says. “It was one of those moments where everything suddenly feels real, and I realised that this journey was truly beginning.”

The first person she shared the news with was her mother, who has played an important role in her life and pageant journey. “The first person I told was my mom. It was such a special moment to share with her,” Shavonne explains. The excitement had to stay within close family at first while the official announcement was still pending. “Holding in such exciting news was challenging, but it also made the moment of the official announcement even more meaningful.”

Entering Miss Grand South Africa was not a sudden decision. Shavonne had been following the pageant for years and always felt drawn to what it represents. She first discovered the competition through social media and quickly admired the brand and its message. “Entering Miss Grand South Africa has been something I’ve wanted to do for several years,” she says. “I kept delaying it and convincing myself to wait until the perfect time.”

Eventually Shavonne realised that waiting for the perfect moment might mean missing the opportunity altogether. Over time she focused on building her confidence and working on herself. “This year I decided it was time to stop waiting and take that step,” she says. “I felt ready, determined, and excited to finally pursue something I had been dreaming about for so long.”

Her journey so far has been both demanding and rewarding. The Miss Grand South Africa process includes various tasks and responsibilities that require focus and dedication. “This year has already been very busy for me,” Shavonne explains. “The journey has challenged me to complete various tasks within specific time frames, but it has also been incredibly rewarding.” Even though the competition is still ongoing, she already feels the personal growth that comes with the experience. “I already feel that I have grown tremendously, both personally and in confidence,” she says. “It has given me a platform where my voice, passions, and advocacy can be seen and heard.”

Representing her province and community on a national stage is something she takes seriously. For Shavonne, it is about more than simply competing. It is about representing the people who have supported her. “It means carrying the pride, values, and spirit of the people who have shaped me,” she says. “It is an honour to stand as someone who reflects the strength and ambition that exists within our communities.”

She also hopes her journey will inspire younger girls who may be watching her progress. “I want young girls to believe in their potential and pursue their dreams with confidence,” she says.

Preparing for the finals requires focus in several areas of her life. Shavonne balances her pageant responsibilities with her law studies and work. “Preparing for the finals has been a holistic journey for me,” she explains. “Mentally, I stay disciplined with my studies and work in law, while also taking time to reflect on my goals.”

Staying physically active is also part of her preparation. Cheerleading and dancing play a big role in her routine. “Cheerleading keeps me fit and energetic, while dancing helps me build strength, confidence, and discipline,” she says.

Like many contestants, Shavonne has faced challenges along the way. One of the biggest has been managing her busy schedule. “This year has been particularly busy for me,” she admits. “Balancing my studies, work, and pageant responsibilities can sometimes feel overwhelming.” Staying organised and maintaining a positive mindset helps her keep everything on track.

Throughout it all, her mother has remained her strongest supporter. “My biggest supporter has truly been my mom,” Shavonne says with a smile. “She is not only my mother but also my best friend.” From planning ideas to offering encouragement, her mother has been there every step of the way. The journey has also helped Shavonne grow as a person. “One of the biggest changes has been in my confidence,” she says. “This experience has encouraged me to step outside of my comfort zone and believe more in my abilities.”

If she were to win the title, Shavonne hopes to focus on several causes that are close to her heart. Supporting animal shelters, promoting peace through the “Stop the War and Violence” campaign, and uplifting young women are among her priorities. She also hopes to support organisations like CANSA and initiatives that help disadvantaged individuals access education.

For Shavonne, pageantry is about far more than appearances. It has helped her develop communication, discipline, leadership, and confidence. “Pageantry has strengthened my public speaking and communication,” she says. “It has taught me discipline and time management as well.” Her message to young women who may look up to her is simple but powerful. “If I can do it, so can you,” she says. “You are capable of achieving anything you set your mind and heart to.”

Looking toward the future, Shavonne has clear ambitions. She hopes to become an Advocate and continue building a career where she can make a difference in the lives of others. At the same time, she plans to keep pursuing her love for dance and remain active in pageantry.

“My goal is to use every opportunity to inspire, empower, and uplift others,” Shavonne says. “No matter where this journey leads, I want to make a positive impact.”

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Whitney Kay-dene Eiman

PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 169

From Passion To Modeling Spotlight

#Finalist

Meet Whitney Kay-dene Eiman

Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition

Whitney is making her mark in South Africa's modeling scene as a finalist in the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition, run by SA Beauty Modeling Academy. The contest offers aspiring models a shot at gracing the cover of PPMC Magazine South Africa, along with cash prizes and recognition in the industry.

Whitney entered the competition because it opens doors for people like her. "I was inspired to enter the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition because it gives aspiring models the opportunity to showcase their confidence, personality, and passion for modeling," she said. "I wanted to challenge myself, grow in the industry, and step outside my comfort zone while pursuing something I truly enjoy."

When SA Beauty Modeling Academy selected her as a contestant, the news hit hard in the best way. "I felt extremely excited and grateful when I was selected," Whitney recalled. "It felt like a wonderful opportunity and a big step forward in my modeling journey. Being chosen motivated me even more to work hard and represent myself with confidence and pride."

For Whitney, being photogenic goes beyond a pretty face in a picture. "To me, being photogenic means more than just looking good in photos," she explained. "It's about expressing confidence, emotion, and personality through the camera. It's the ability to tell a story and connect with people through an image."

She prepares carefully for every shoot. Mentally, Whitney keeps a positive mindset. "Before a photoshoot, I try to stay positive and focused," she said. "Mentally, I remind myself to relax and enjoy the experience." Physically, she focuses on basics: rest, hydration, and planning outfits that fit the theme. What makes Whitney stand out among the other finalists? She points to her drive and realness. "I believe my determination, authenticity, and willingness to learn set me apart," she said. "I always strive to improve myself and bring my unique personality and confidence to every opportunity."

Confidence plays a huge role in a competition like this, where the goal is a magazine cover. "Confidence is extremely important because it shows through in photographs and in the way you present yourself," Whitney noted. "When you believe in yourself, it naturally reflects in your posture, expression, and overall presence."

The thought of her face on the cover of PPMC Magazine South Africa fills her with pride. "Seeing my face on the cover of PPMC Magazine South Africa would be an incredible honor," she said. "It would represent hard work, dedication, and a dream becoming reality. It would also motivate me to continue pursuing modeling and inspiring others to believe in themselves." Whitney describes her modeling style simply: "Confident, elegant, expressive."

Her journey has not been easy. She faced a lack of chances and support for young people full of passion and talent. "Lack of opportunity and help towards young believers with so much passion and talent," she said when asked about challenges. But she pushed through by going beyond her usual limits.

"I overcome it already, searching outside my comfort zone and boundaries making use of social media for better opportunities to become part of the big successful modeling world," Whitney explained. "Another way of overcoming the lack of opportunities is this very same opportunity that I found and grabbed with both hands. Being a finalist helped me a lot."

With cash prizes and a major title on the line, pressure is part of the deal. Whitney handles it by shifting her focus. "I try to focus on enjoying the experience rather than stressing about the outcome," she said. "Pressure can be motivating, but staying calm, confident, and focused helps me perform at my best."

Her biggest cheerleaders have been close by her side. "My biggest supporters have been my fiancé and close family," Whitney said. "Their encouragement and belief in me have helped me stay motivated and confident throughout the competition."

If she takes the overall title, Whitney has clear plans. "If I win the overall title, I would use the platform to continue growing in the modeling industry while inspiring others to follow their dreams and believe in themselves," she said. "I would also love to support and uplift young people who want to pursue modeling."

She already has some wins to her name. "I've been selected for multiple photoshoots to promote make-up artists' work as well as photographers' work," Whitney shared. "Being selected as a finalist in the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition is also a huge achievement for me."

As the competition moves forward, Whitney keeps her eyes on the goal: turning her passion into a lasting career while lifting others along the way. Her story shows what happens when someone grabs an opportunity and runs with it.

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Priya Nunkumar

#Inspire

Interview with Priya Nunkumar

Voice for Safety and Community Change

Priya Nunkumar has spent over a decade shaping the way communities in KwaZulu-Natal interact with the South African Police Service. Recently nominated for the Influential Women Awards 2026, Priya was shortlisted among the top 30 candidates in the province from more than 200 contenders—a milestone she says carries both pride and reflection.

"It is an absolute honour for me," Priya shares. "While highlighting my 10 Year Milestone, it also reminds me of the hard work, late nights and planning of events that I have done over the years in various parts of the Province, both with the South African Police Service and the SAPS Women's Network. The passion I had for writing and designing has always followed me from a very young age, and it's a career I can proudly say I have been born to do. It makes me absolutely thrilled to know I've taken myself this far in my career."

Her current role as iLembe District Communications Official sees her juggling public statements on major arrests with outreach programs across 10 policing precincts. Priya explains how this builds on past accolades like the SAPS Excellence Awards and Panache Women of Wonder.

"My past awards and achievements are always a reminder to me to always strive for the best. I'm so grateful to be in an environment with supportive parents who motivate me to do better and make a difference in the community. We look at crime trends and create projects along with the precinct's communication officials and social crime prevention officers, ensuring every community receives

Priya's innovative projects include the Child Identification Booklet—the first of its kind in iLembe. "It's still being distributed and used, and it's helped families and officers in emergencies. Recently, a child went missing and the booklet's information helped officers locate them quickly. That makes all the effort worthwhile." Her Beat Bullying campaign continues to leave a mark on schools. Priya recalls a recent incident in KwaDukuza: "There was a serious case where the school bully had been cyber bullying the victim.

She used the information given in our program and reported it directly to the school. The principal, the bully, the victim, and I sat down together and resolved the situation without conflict or confrontation. Moments like that show the impact of teaching children to speak up."

Creativity fuels every campaign Priya undertakes. Her 'Tre the Terrific Cop' initiative, blends fun and safety education with word searches, crosswords, and practical advice on bullying, school safety, and personal safety. "We also teach children the emergency number to call the police. It's designed to be engaging and memorable for young minds."

Priya's work extends to domestic violence support. "Recently, a woman reached out after being assaulted by her spouse. We opened a case at KwaDukuza SAPS, secured a protection order at the magistrate's court the same day, and ensured she had a safe place to stay. Partnerships with local organizations amplified this support and helped the victim regain stability."

Balancing official communications with community campaigns is a skill she has honed over the years. "I've learnt to write on the go. Whether it's a major crime statement or a community initiative, everything is done promptly. This year, my focus is on increasing child safety awareness, which will lead to new campaigns in schools."

Priya attributes her drive to her love for helping people, a passion that started during her teenage years as a journalist writing a column for young people. "During emergencies, my first instinct is always to help, whether it's missing children or domestic violence cases. Working closely with the FCS Unit and local Child Welfare ensures every child and victim receives support." Her dedication has earned top placements in SAPS Excellence Awards and recognition for her communication skills. "Seeing a child smile after a safety talk or witnessing a victim relieved after receiving assistance is my greatest motivation. Those moments remind me why I chose this career."

For parents, Priya has one key piece of advice from her Child Identification Booklet experience: "Communication. Parents and children need an open line of communication. Many missing teenager cases stem from a lack of trust or connection at home. Building that bond can prevent crises and provide safety for children."

Looking ahead, Priya is expanding her child-focused initiatives. "For 2026/2027, I'm creating new series of crosswords, word searches, and safety manuals for children, including contact numbers for emergencies, mental health support, and substance abuse help. Every child deserves to be safe and heard."

Priya Nunkumar's career is a reminder that creativity, dedication, and a deep love for the community can turn passion into lasting impact. Her recognition in the Influential Women Awards 2026 is a milestone that celebrates not just her achievements, but the difference she continues to make in iLembe and beyond.

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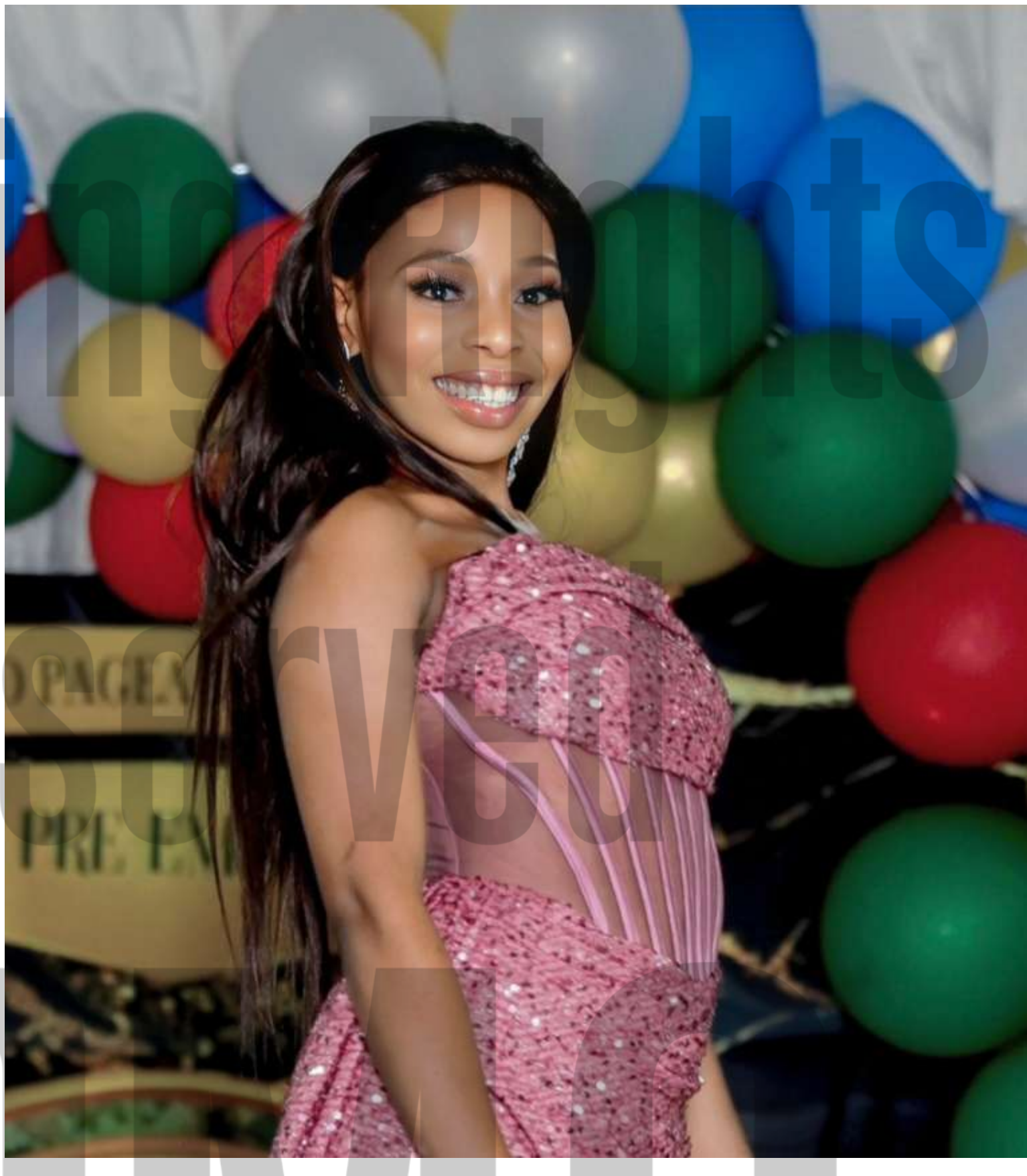
#Finalist

Meet Lenny Shannel Thokoane

From Bullied to Bold Pageant Star



Shannel Lenny Thokoane is stepping into an exciting new chapter as she prepares for two major pageants: Toddler and Tween finalist and Miss Icon International SA finalist for 2026. “I am over excited to embark on this journey,” Shannel says. “It is my first big competition and I am looking forward to it. I am someone who is working on self-growth.”

Shannel describes herself as patient and kind. She has faced many difficulties while growing up. “I have been through a lot of challenges—some broke me, some built me,” she explains. She acts as a sister and role model to her younger siblings and remains family-oriented.

She once loved playing cricket and softball, but car accidents and broken bones forced her to stop. Now she focuses entirely on pageants. In her spare time she has taken up baking. “My new hobby is in the kitchen baking, and I am still discovering what I can do on the other side,” she says.

Shannel grew up in a toxic environment full of bullies. “I used to be bullied every week, especially in school,” she recalls, “but I am happy it didn’t destroy me. I found a way to grow and use it as a weapon.” Pageantry changed her life. “Ever since I joined pageantry I have become more confident,” she notes. “Pageantry gave me confidence I didn’t have from a young age.”

Her first pageant came in high school. She entered without a clear motive, just wanting to take part, and reached the top 10. Financial issues then forced a long break. She watched friends compete and supported them. Eventually she decided to return. “I said to myself I will do it no matter what,” Shannel remembers.

“I had been in a shell for so long and was bullied because of acne, so I decided one day I would boost my confidence, enter pageants, and become an example to young ladies who get bullied for having acne or being poor.” She wants to show that bullies do not define anyone’s future.

#Finalist

Meet Lenny Shannel Thokoane

From Bullied to Bold Pageant Star

“Those people do not define your future—they are just bullies trying to destroy you,” she says.

When she returned to pageants she had almost no confidence. “I was just a lost person who lacked confidence, but gradually I started getting better and now I am fully confident and happy,” she says. The main inspiration was to stand bold and prove her worth.

“What inspired me most was to walk there confident and bold, show people that I am beautiful regardless and that I have what it takes—no bully can define me—and to encourage others that they can do this too.” She entered to challenge herself and build a legacy, but gained much more. “I entered pageants to see how far I could grow and build my legacy, and I learned more than that instead.”

The upcoming competitions fill her with joy. “I am excited because it is a moment I have been waiting for, and the time God decided for me to embark on,” Shannel says. On stage she loves showing her capabilities. “When I am on stage I just love showcasing what I am capable of and proving how confident I can be,” she explains.

Making eye contact with judges once felt difficult, but now it strengthens her. “I love looking at the judges because I was shy—and still am a shy baby girl—especially with eye contact, but facing them on stage gives me courage to stop being shy and face challenges.” Preparations are moving forward.

She has selected suitable outfits and heels for both pageants, is practising public speaking to raise her tone and fix grammar issues, and keeps lists for souvenirs, gifts and food parcels. Sponsors remain a challenge, but she stays positive. “I still have challenges with sponsorship, but I believe I will get there in time,” she says. Her family supports her visually, especially with voting, but Shannel is used to handling most of the journey alone. “I am used to being alone on this journey ever since I started,” she notes. “It is not easy to get support, so I am used to being my own supporter and encouraging myself to do harder and better.” She joined a modelling school for support on competition day, turning it into her team.

The connections mean the most. “My exciting moment is meeting people who have become more important in my life now through pageants,” Shannel says. “Sisterhood—being there for each other, congratulating everyone.” She values the lessons in confidence, discipline and the industry.

Discipline remains central. “Discipline is my core story, respect,” she says. “I have learnt that discipline can take you far beyond. Hard work pays off.” The stage is about growth more than crowns. “When on stage it is not about the crown—it is about growth, confidence and legacy,” she explains. She stresses staying true to herself and giving back. “Modelling has taught me that giving to the less fortunate is not a favour but having a heart of gold,” she adds. “Charity is not only for rich people but for everyone—give the little you have.”

Growth draws her most. She enjoys the emphasis on charity and kindness. “I love giving even when I have little, so this part of charity is my favourite activity, along with the sisterhood I will form along the journey,” she says.

To others she offers clear advice. “Dear Queens, do what you love and what your heart desires,” Shannel says. “Do not let people put you down or destroy you. Face challenges on your own and fight for what you love. Start small and never give up—success takes time, so have patience and practise often to build confidence. You do not need expensive clothes to enter. What matters is to be presentable and represent yourself on stage. Discipline, respect, passion and confidence are key to pageants.” She enjoys travelling, swimming and cooking. “I love travelling a lot, I love swimming—just being surrounded by water or in a pool makes me happy,” she says. “I love cooking—I don’t go two days without the stove.”

Titles matter, but her goals have grown. “At first I was chasing a crown, although it is still on my list, but now it is about being a voice for the voiceless, representing myself and those who are bullied, and offering mentorship and support,” she explains. Meeting other queens and gaining self-awareness top her list of achievements.

Pageantry inspired her charity foundation. “I already started a charity foundation—all thanks to pageantry for introducing it to me,” Shannel says. “So far I have given food to 30 people and it has been a great journey. I want to give more.” She hopes to expand it, claim bigger titles, encourage young people, and one day reach Miss SA and major international pageants while growing her entrepreneurial dreams and helping new queens.

Shannel’s path shows quiet determination turning past pain into purpose and hope.

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LAUREN-MARIE MKUNGELA

Mrs South Africa 2026 Semi-finalist

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#Finalist

Meet Lauren-Marie Mkungela

Mrs South Africa 2026 Semi-finalist

A story by:
Etienne Vermaak

Lauren-Marie Mkungela, a semi-finalist in Mrs South Africa 2026, sits down to talk about her journey with a quiet confidence that comes from real change. Just over a year ago, she was in a different place. As a wife, mother of two, and full-time corporate professional, she carried extra weight and felt stuck. Then she made a decision to choose herself. Over the past year, Lauren-Marie lost 38kg, transforming her health and her outlook.

"I was motivated to participate in Mrs South Africa because I have seen such significant changes in myself over the past year," she says. "Through my own personal journey, I realised that my story could be powerful for other women, especially mothers and wives who might feel the way I once did. The woman I was just over a year ago would have needed someone like the woman I am today – someone to remind her that she deserves to choose herself, to grow, and to make changes that transform her life."

The journey as a semi-finalist has been short so far – only about a month and a half – but it has already brought meaning. Lauren-Marie says she feels personal growth happening in real time. Meeting other women in the competition stands out as a highlight.

Preparing for the pageant meant focusing on building confidence, wellness, and stepping outside her comfort zone. Coming from corporate spaces, the shift felt unfamiliar at first. "The biggest challenge has been embracing something so different from the corporate spaces I'm used to," she explains, "but I have learned that real growth happens when you allow yourself to be uncomfortable."

Participating has sharpened her awareness of how she shows up in the world. It has pushed her to reflect on the woman she wants to be – for her children, for herself, and for others. Her confidence has grown through new, sometimes intimidating spaces. "Being in spaces that are new and sometimes a little intimidating has taught me to trust myself more and to embrace my story," she notes. Lauren-Marie believes a pageant winner should be authentic, confident, and someone who uplifts others while living with purpose. She points to her own life as proof. "I live these qualities by being true to my own journey and leading by example, showing other women that it's never too late to choose yourself and grow."

Her platform centers on women's health and wellness. In South Africa, more than two-thirds of women are overweight or obese, affecting both body and mind, especially after childbirth. Lauren-Marie knows this struggle firsthand. She wants to share practical tools – daily movement, intuitive eating, proper portion sizes – that anyone can use, even without expensive trainers or gyms.

"When you empower a woman through education, you don't just change her life, you change the lives of her family and the next generation," she says. Her aim is to reduce preventable illnesses like diabetes and heart disease, easing pressure on the health system.

One moment that stayed with her came during a recent workshop. Listening to fellow semi-finalists share their stories moved her deeply. "It was both deeply moving and inspiring to hear about the challenges they have overcome," she recalls.

Balancing the role with family, work, and pageant events takes planning. Lauren-Marie stays present in each part of her life. "My family inspires me, my career motivates me, and this journey challenges me to grow, so it all comes together instead of feeling like a balancing act," she says.

What sets her apart? She describes herself as a hard worker who leads with kindness and connects easily with people. "I enjoy getting to know others and finding common ground, and I believe that ability to relate and connect is one of my strengths." For Lauren-Marie, beauty comes from within. "When I think of beauty, I think of someone who has a light shining from within. Kindness, for me, is true beauty." She celebrates South Africa's diverse looks, naming past queens like Tshego, Erin, Verushka, and Jo as examples of different yet equal beauty. She focuses on her own individuality and encourages others to do the same.

To young people who might look up to her, she offers simple words: "Never be afraid to dream big. Don't let fear hold you back from going after what you truly want. If you give it your all, you might surprise yourself. The only true failure is not trying at all."

"If she wins, Lauren-Marie plans to use the platform to lead purpose-driven collaborations and targeted workshops focused on weight management and sustainable lifestyle change. These initiatives will focus on supporting underprivileged communities through education that empowers women to make healthier lifestyle choices and helps address South Africa's growing obesity pandemic.

The goal of these collaborations is impact rather than profit, with a strong focus on reducing weight-related illnesses. Long-term, she hopes to expand this work beyond social media into accessible programs that create lasting, meaningful change."

One lesson stands out: "Don't be afraid of hearing no. Every no brings you one step closer to a yes." She praises Mrs South Africa for its focus on growth and empowerment through workshops that build skills for life. "Calling Mrs South Africa just a beauty pageant really minimizes the difference it makes in the lives of its contestants," she says.

Her advice to anyone considering a pageant? Research thoroughly, choose one that matches your values, prepare to grow, step out of your comfort zone, and enjoy it. For Lauren-Marie, this felt right from the start.

Reserved

#Finalist

Interview with Tshiamo Sigo

Mrs Commonwealth South Africa 2026 Finalist

Tshiamo is stepping into a new chapter with confidence and purpose after being announced as an official finalist for Mrs Commonwealth South Africa 2026. For her, the moment was more than just exciting news. It was confirmation that the dreams she had carried for years still mattered. “Thank you very much,” Tshiamo says when reflecting on the announcement. “I think for me it was a reassuring moment. Reassurance that my dreams are valid and that it is never too late to chase them.”

For Tshiamo, pageantry is not something that suddenly appeared in her life. It is a dream that began when she was still a young girl. Long before the competitions and the titles, she imagined herself walking confidently as a model and representing something bigger than herself. “As a young girl I always dreamt of becoming a model so to some extent I owed it to myself,” Tshiamo explains. “Not only that, Mrs Commonwealth is not just any pageant, it is based on the idea of a woman that is prepared to stand in the gap and that resonates very well with me.”

Her journey into pageantry gained momentum when she became a finalist in The Next Opulent Model SA 2025. That experience helped shape the woman she is today and gave her the confidence to aim even higher. “The Mrs Opulent journey opened my eyes to a world that only ever existed in my dreams,” Tshiamo says. “The experience was unmatched, I got to see myself in a different light. As a bold, confident woman. Those are qualities that I think I needed in order for me to have the courage to enter Mrs Commonwealth SA.”

Now preparing for a national stage, Tshiamo understands that her journey represents more than personal achievement. She carries with her the hopes of the community and province she represents. “This does not only set me up for personal growth,” she explains. “I believe that it also puts me in a better position to serve. This journey will create a platform for me to reach spaces that I individually wouldn’t have been able to reach.”

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#Finalist

Interview with Tshiamo Sigo

Mrs Commonwealth South Africa 2026 Finalist

Preparing for a pageant at this level requires dedication in many areas. For Tshiamo, the journey has encouraged her to rethink how she approaches health and personal wellbeing. “I grew up very skinny so I always believed that I could get away with eating anything,” she says honestly. “But through this journey I learned that health is not only about the size of your dress. It’s in the everyday things that we do.”

She adds that growth has also come from being more aware of what she surrounds herself with. “It’s in the things we choose to invest our time in, socially, intellectually and otherwise. I’ve become more cautious of what I listen to, what I tell myself and what energies I surround myself with.”

When asked what makes a strong Mrs Commonwealth contestant in today’s world, Tshiamo believes the answer lies in character rather than appearance. “Compassion, selflessness, honesty and an unwavering spirit,” she says. Like many contestants, Tshiamo has faced challenges along the way. One of the biggest hurdles has been securing sponsorships, something many pageant contestants understand well.

“Honestly, I think the biggest challenge in any pageant will always be securing solid sponsorships,” Tshiamo admits. “My approach was not to go out there looking for handouts, I always try to create a win-win partnership.”

Through it all, her support system has remained strong. Family has played a major role in encouraging her to continue pursuing her goals. “My family is my support structure,” she says. “From my parents, siblings, aunts, cousins and friends that have become family. My first official sponsorship actually came from a family member who owns a business.”

Pageantry has also helped Tshiamo grow in ways she did not expect. One of the most important changes has been her confidence and the way she sees herself. “I have to say, this journey has done a lot for my level of confidence,” Tshiamo explains. “I no longer focus on my imperfections. Now I focus on my strengths and how I can use them to reach my best potential.” Professionally, the experience has also helped her build her brand as a model and opened doors that once felt out of reach.

If crowned Mrs Commonwealth South Africa 2026, Tshiamo already knows which cause she wants to focus on. Mental health among young people is something she feels strongly about. “I have always had a passion for mental health amongst young children and teenagers,” she says. “Because I believe that if we ensure that we raise children whose mental wellbeing has been prioritised, we can almost guarantee a future with adults that are not still struggling to heal from childhood traumas.”

Handling pressure during competition is something Tshiamo approaches with humility and a willingness to learn. “I am one person who is not afraid to take notes from those who came before me,” she says. “Those who have walked the journey and succeeded. I also invest a lot of time in trying to gain more insight on whatever journey I take.”

One of the most valuable skills she has developed along the way is something very personal to her. “I have to say social skills,” Tshiamo admits. “I grew up as one of those socially awkward kids, often misunderstood. Throughout this journey I have learned how to interact better with people, how to express myself without the fear of being misinterpreted.”

For women considering entering pageants later in life, Tshiamo believes clarity of purpose is essential. “I would say anyone intending to enter a pageant must first establish why they are doing it,” she advises. “Because if your why is not solid enough it will be very easy to crumble under pressure.”

Balancing pageantry with everyday life has been easier thanks to the support of those closest to her. “Fortunately for me, the people closest to me have been very supportive in my journey so there is rarely a need for me to separate my personal life from this journey,” she says. “Professionally, I do my best to manage my time well.”

While the Mrs Commonwealth South Africa competition is currently her focus, Tshiamo is already thinking about the future. The journey, she says, is only one chapter in a much larger story. “I feel like the Mrs Commonwealth journey has always been the missing chapter in a book that I intend to write,” Tshiamo reveals. “I cannot share further details at this point but yes, after this, I intend to publish a book.”

For Tshiamo, the stage is not simply about a crown. It is about purpose, growth and creating a future where her voice can inspire others to follow their own dreams.

Reserved

BM Productions

PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 169

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Purposeful Storytelling Through Light and Legacy

BM Productions, run by Brian van Niekerk and Monique van Niekerk, has carved out a distinctive place in South Africa's photography landscape. Together, they describe their work as a "storytelling experience rooted in purpose, passion, and presence." They bring that philosophy into every session by putting connection first.

From the start, BM Productions has focused on understanding clients before any camera comes out. Every session begins with questions about who the client is, what this moment means in their life, and what they hope to look back on years later. "Purpose means we shoot intentionally. Passion fuels creativity. Presence ensures clients never feel rushed or overlooked," they explain. That approach has defined the BM Productions experience since day one.

Their black-and-white studio portraits are known for being striking and deeply emotive. What pulls them toward monochrome? "Black and white became a signature style as the brand evolved. Early on, we realized that removing color amplifies emotion. It highlights strength, vulnerability, texture, and expression in a way few other styles can," they say. These portraits capture their core belief: identity stands powerful on its own. The images feel timeless, suited to hang in homes for generations and carry stories beyond passing trends.

Dramatic natural light and carefully themed shoots mark much of their portfolio. They built BM Productions on a close study of light, particularly natural light, and over time those dramatic compositions became a key part of their brand. They select locations, times of day, and angles with care to build depth and mood. For themed work, everything starts with the narrative. Wardrobe, textures, props, and color palettes all serve the story. "The goal is not to create something trendy, but something enduring and powerful," they note.

Their range covers families, weddings, fine art, landscapes, and astrophotography. Right now, immersive Milky Way experiences excite them most. While weddings and portraits remain at the foundation, these night-sky sessions blend technical skill, storytelling, landscape artistry, and emotional presence into single frames. It mirrors the full arc of BM Productions — from early landscape and light explorations to images that place people within the vastness of creation.

Astrophotography grew from their shared love of landscapes and dramatic skies. It has since turned into curated experiences rather than standard shoots. "Standing beneath the Milky Way humbles people. It shifts perspective. These sessions are about more than images — they're about wonder, connection, and stepping into something bigger than ourselves," they say.

They create a safe and empowering space by putting people ahead of perfection. Clients receive gentle, confident guidance. They demonstrate poses, offer clear directions, and provide steady affirmation. Confidence builds through reassurance, and when clients feel at ease, real authenticity emerges. "That authenticity is what makes images powerful," they add.

Balancing their artistic vision with client expectations relies on collaboration. Experience has shown them that the best results come from combining strengths. They supply lighting expertise, composition knowledge, and creative direction; clients provide personal meaning and emotional context. They align visions before the shoot and guide during it to enhance the client's ideas while lifting them artistically. The outcome feels personal yet polished.

Their expansion into Pretoria and farther areas grew naturally. Word-of-mouth recommendations, steady quality, and a recognizable style extended trust beyond Middelburg. Interest from Pretoria and nearby regions increased without any shift in approach — the work stayed emotionally rich, elegant, and deliberate. Growth never diluted their focus: they still aim to create exceptional images with clear purpose.

One client story stands out to them. They delivered a black-and-white portrait to a family who had never seen themselves portrayed so boldly and beautifully. Tears came — not from flawless technique, but from feeling truly seen. "Those are the moments that define BM Productions. Turning ordinary sessions into emotional legacy pieces," they recall.

What distinguishes BM Productions in South Africa's photography community? They weave together portraiture, cinematic weddings, fine art, landscapes, and immersive astrophotography under one consistent vision. With roots in multiple genres, they avoid copying trends and instead build meaningful experiences. "It is not here to be another — it is here to stand out through intentional storytelling and refined execution," they state.

They draw inspiration from light, people, faith, and the world around them. Ongoing learning in areas like advanced editing, panoramic Milky Way methods, and cinematic techniques keeps their skills sharp. Yet the heart of their work stays constant. Professional standards deliver excellence; purpose gives it depth.

Their dreams for BM Productions involve growing immersive photography offerings, running Milky Way workshops, forming creative partnerships across South Africa, and developing portrait collections that reach beyond provincial lines as lasting legacies. "The goal is not just growth — it's impact," they say.

For aspiring photographers aiming to build a purpose-driven business, their advice is straightforward. "Master your craft — technically and creatively. But more importantly, define your 'why.' Skill can be learned; purpose must be discovered. Stand firm in your identity. Build slowly. Serve well. Be consistent. When passion is anchored in intention, distinction follows naturally."

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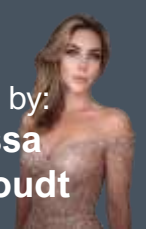
Charmaine Howell

#Fitness

Interview with Charmaine Howell

Transforming Lives Through Faith Fitness



A story by:
Melissa Nieuwoudt

In a world where quick fixes dominate the fitness scene, Charmaine Howell stands apart. As the founder of Team Chaz, she has built more than just a gym — she has created a community where physical, mental, and spiritual transformation intersect.

With decades of competitive experience, professional qualifications, and a foundation firmly rooted in faith, Charmaine brings a holistic approach to fitness. From Springbok-level netball to world championship bodybuilding, her journey is defined by discipline, purpose, and unwavering commitment.

"My journey started in sport. I ran competitively and played netball at Springbok level," Charmaine explains. "After a knee injury ended that chapter, I turned to bodybuilding. What began as rehabilitation quickly became a passion."

Before fully stepping into fitness, Charmaine had already built a career as a Chartered Accountant and served as Managing Director of an international herbal network marketing company. "That season allowed me to study herbs, nutrition, and the science behind restoring health," she says. "It gave me a foundation to help people transform physically, mentally, and spiritually."

Charmaine credits her mentor, Beaulah Strydom, for inspiring her to open her own gym. "She asked me, 'Why don't you start your own?' She saw something in me before I saw it in myself. I wanted to create a space that wasn't just about lifting weights — but about lifting people."

Her approach to clients is deeply personal. "We start with conversation. I find out their goals, where they are mentally and spiritually, and we pray together before putting a plan in place," she says. "Then we assess measurements, weight, and lifestyle habits, and build structured training and nutrition programmes. It's never just about fat loss — it's about alignment, accountability, and growth in every area."

Charmaine emphasizes the importance of nutrition. "If someone is overweight, stressed, or dealing with illness, the first step is simple: cut out sugar and refined carbs like white bread, pasta, potatoes, and rice. That alone wins half the battle. Then focus on balance — vegetables, fruit, quality protein, healthy fats. And most importantly: consistency. Just show up. Even on the hard days."

One of her most rewarding experiences has been helping clients overcome mental and emotional barriers. "One of my greatest challenges is working with people who have eating disorders. Teaching someone to fuel their body properly can be harder than helping someone lose weight," she says. "A standout transformation was Janine Brown, who lost over 40kg and has maintained it. But beyond the weight loss, her confidence and discipline completely changed her life."

Charmaine's own motivation comes from faith and leading by example. "I spend time with God every morning before my day begins. That quiet time directs my steps. I also test the programmes myself. If I expect my clients to commit, I must be the example."

When designing personalised training programmes, she considers injuries, limitations, lifestyle, and goals. "Some clients train heavier, others lighter — it depends on their season and capacity. I pray for direction and trust that wisdom comes through experience and guidance. Each programme is built specifically for the individual."

Bodybuilding has played a huge role in shaping Charmaine's discipline. "It's one of the most extreme sports. Training is intense, meal plans strict, and posing practice essential. Competitors cycle through phases of over-eating, calorie restriction, and water manipulation to peak on stage. Ironically, when you look your absolute best — shredded and stage-ready — you often feel your worst physically. It's a mental and physical test of endurance."

Her accolades include being South African Champion for over 12 years and winning the WPF World Championship twice. "Those titles represented discipline, sacrifice, and perseverance. Bodybuilding taught me the power of not giving up," she reflects.

Community drives Charmaine's work. Her Sunday boot camps at Ruimsig Stadium have run for 27 years, are free, and open to everyone. "It's high energy, powerful physically and spiritually, and a place for people to grow together," she says.

Her advice to aspiring fitness enthusiasts is simple: "Stay in your lane. Don't compare your journey to anyone else's. Give yourself grace to stumble, but always get back up. Fitness isn't a luxury — it's medicine for longevity, strength, and mental health. Your body is the one place you have to live in for life — take care of it."

For Team Chaz, transformation isn't measured only in trophies or muscles. "Championships may decorate the journey, but transformed lives define the legacy," Charmaine says. In a world chasing shortcuts, she continues to build something lasting: strong bodies, resilient minds, and unwavering faith.

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Nhlakanipho Ndwandwe

Building Influence Through Authentic Style

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#Inspire

Meet Nhlakanipho Ndwandwe

Style, Confidence and Digital Influence

Nhlakanipho Ndwandwe's journey from a small-town operations supervisor to a recognized fashion and lifestyle influencer shows how passion and consistency can open doors in the digital world.

Nhlakanipho is 26 years old and lives in Richards Bay, where he was born and raised. He works full-time as an Operations Supervisor at a courier company. Outside his job, he has built a following of 12,000 on Instagram, where he shares his outfits, lifestyle moments, and personal thoughts. In his free time, he enjoys playing chess or watching cricket.

His story began in November 2020. "My journey into influencing started naturally on Instagram," Nhlakanipho says. "I began posting my outfits, lifestyle moments, and thoughts. Over time, people started engaging more with my content and the platform slowly grew to over 12K followers."

What pushed him to share his life online was the power he saw in social media. "What inspired me the most was seeing how powerful social media can be in shaping culture and influencing people in a positive way," he explains. "I realized that even someone from a small town like Richards Bay could build a voice online. I wanted to share style inspiration, confidence, and everyday lifestyle content that people could relate to." Nhlakanipho describes his brand in straightforward terms. "My brand is centered around style, confidence, and authenticity," he says. "I enjoy presenting a lifestyle that feels aspirational but still relatable. The message I try to share is that you can look good, feel confident, and pursue your goals no matter where you come from."

When asked what content he enjoys creating the most, his answer comes quickly. "Fashion and lifestyle content are definitely my favorites," Nhlakanipho says. "I enjoy putting outfits together and capturing moments that reflect my personality and daily life. Fashion is a form of self-expression for me, so sharing that with my audience feels very natural."

One moment stands out as a major highlight in his career so far. "One of the biggest highlights for me was collaborating with Prince Buthelezi Mall as one of their influencers," he recalls. "It was a proud moment because it showed that my content and brand were being recognized by major local businesses."

Like many creators, Nhlakanipho faces challenges in his daily routine. The biggest one is finding balance between work and content. "One of the challenges is balancing a full-time job while consistently creating content," he admits. "It requires discipline and good time management. I've learned to plan my content and stay committed even on days when motivation is low."

To keep going in the fast-moving world of social media, he relies on his original reasons for starting. "I stay consistent by reminding myself why I started and by focusing on improvement rather than perfection," Nhlakanipho says. "I also take inspiration from everyday life, fashion trends, and other creators, but I always try to keep my own unique style."

Authenticity remains central to how he connects with his audience. "Authenticity is very important to me," he notes. "People connect with real personalities, not just perfect pictures. I try to stay true to who I am and share content that genuinely reflects my lifestyle and interests."

Negative comments are part of being visible online, but Nhlakanipho handles them without letting them derail him. "Criticism comes with the territory of being online," he says. "I've learned not to take everything personally. If feedback is constructive, I take it as an opportunity to improve. If it's just negativity, I simply focus on the positive support from my community."

Certain partnerships have helped him move forward. "Some of the collaborations that had a significant impact on my journey was working with Union DNM and Code Originals in 2022," Nhlakanipho shares. "That experience really cemented my place in content creation and affirmed that I was moving in the right direction. It was a moment that showed me that brands believed in my vision and the value of the content I create."

For young people who want to follow a similar path, his advice is direct and practical. "My advice would be to start with what you have and stay consistent," he says. "Focus on building your own voice instead of copying others. Growth takes time, but authenticity and dedication will always stand out."

Looking to the future, Nhlakanipho has clear plans for what comes next. "My goal is to grow my brand further and collaborate with more brands in fashion, lifestyle, and retail," he explains. "I also want to continue inspiring my audience through style, confidence, and everyday lifestyle content. My followers can definitely expect more creative content and bigger collaborations in the future."

Nhlakanipho Ndwandwe continues to show that starting in a small place does not limit how far you can reach. With steady effort and a genuine approach, he is building a presence that connects with people who value real style and real confidence.

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Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition

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LITALIA DUKHEE

Litalia Dukhee is using her voice and her platform to speak about confidence, self-belief and mental health. As a contestant in the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition, Litalia says her decision to enter was not simply about chasing a title. For her, the competition represents something much deeper. “Entering this competition wasn't just to become a winner,” Litalia explains. “It was to become an inspiration to the community and the world.”

Litalia is currently an Honours student in Psychological Counselling, and she sees the competition as an opportunity to bring together her passion for helping people and her love for modelling. She believes that platforms like Cover Star SA can be used to uplift others and remind women that confidence starts from within.

“Cover Star SA is a platform that I, as an Honour's in Psychological Counselling student, would use to encourage females from all around the world to stay true to themselves and work on their confidence daily,” Litalia says. “Potentially winning Cover Star SA provides me with the opportunity to mentally help others, and that is what inspired me to enter.”

When Litalia was selected as a contestant by SA Beauty Modeling Academy, she says she felt thankful for the chance to grow and make a positive impact. For her, the competition is not just about personal success, but also about using the moment to uplift others.

“I felt grateful to be part of this opportunity,” Litalia says. “I would use this platform to the fullest to ensure that I make a difference in the lives of individuals. It is always exciting to be part of this journey with other passionate and inspiring contestants.”

When it comes to being photogenic, Litalia believes the concept is often misunderstood. She feels it is not about having perfect features, but about being genuine in front of the camera. “I personally think that being photogenic means being your true self and being comfortable in front of the camera regardless of your physical features,” Litalia explains. Preparing for a photoshoot is both a physical and mental process for Litalia. She believes that feeling good and being present in the moment makes a big difference when stepping in front of the camera. “I ensure that I'm hydrated, clean in every area, smelling good and not wearing too much makeup,” she says with a smile. “I mentally prepare myself by stepping out of my comfort zone during the photoshoot. Regardless of the aspects I am dealing with in life, it is all pushed aside for that moment.”

Among a group of talented contestants, Litalia believes what sets her apart is her mindset. She says her focus is not on proving herself to others, but on personal growth and helping people along the way. “I am self-confident and humble,” Litalia says. “I am not part of this competition to prove my worth to anyone. I am part of this competition to grow as an individual and use this opportunity to make a difference in at least one person's life.”

Confidence, she believes, plays an important role when competing for something as visible as a magazine cover. But Litalia says confidence must be real and consistent, not something that only appears when the cameras are on. “Confidence is very important in every aspect of life,” she says.

“When competing for a magazine cover like PPMC Magazine South Africa, it is important to portray your true self to the world and not just the confidence you bring for that period of time just to be on a magazine cover.”

If she were to see her face on the cover of PPMC Magazine South Africa, Litalia says the moment would mean a great deal to her. “I would be honored to have been presented with this opportunity,” she says. Describing her modelling style, Litalia uses four words that reflect her personality and approach to the industry. “Creative, authentic, consistent and classic,” she says.

Her journey in modelling began in 2019, but the path was not always easy. Litalia explains that she first entered the modelling world while dealing with personal struggles and low confidence. “My modelling journey commenced in 2019 as a shy and self-conscious individual,” she says. “I took this step because I was being bullied on a daily basis, which resulted in me losing a part of myself.” Joining an agency brought its own challenges. Surrounded by confident individuals, Litalia had to find her own voice and learn to believe in herself again. “It was very challenging to be in a new environment filled with so many confident individuals,” she says. “It took me time to discover the level of confidence I possess and to decide if modelling was really for me.”

Despite the pressure of competing for prizes and a major title, Litalia says she approaches the competition with a calm mindset. “Knowing that there is so much at stake does not pressurize me,” she explains. “I believe that the contestant who deserves the title and cash prize will be fairly chosen.”

She also believes that true contestants support each other, rather than focusing only on winning. “It is important to be happy for the other contestants who deserve the prize,” she says. “That should not be the main reason why we entered this competition.”

Interestingly, when asked who her biggest supporter has been throughout the competition, Litalia gives an answer that reflects her personal growth. “It has always been my younger self,” she says. “I look back on my modelling journey and remember why I chose this path.”

If she wins the overall title, Litalia plans to focus on raising awareness about mental health, something she feels is often overlooked. “As an Honour's in Psychological Counselling student, I would like to use this platform to help those with mental health struggles,” she says. “Mental health is a very important part of every individual's life. We all go through struggles at some point, so it is important to help those who need support.”

When speaking about achievements, Litalia says her proudest moment has not been a crown or a title. Instead, it has been her personal development and growth. “My greatest achievement was not a title,” Litalia says. “It was the will I developed to improve myself every year and the self-confidence I have built throughout my years as a model.”

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Miss Redefined SA 2026 Finalist

Khanyisile Tshabalala

#Inspire

Introducing Khanyisile Tshabalala

Founder of The Miss Virtue Pageant

Khanyisile Tshabalala stands out in the South African pageant world as the founder and director of Miss Virtue pageant. She also works as a modelling coach and competes as a pageant model herself. Based in Gauteng's Vaal area, she pours her energy into helping young women build stronger futures.

Khanyisile started Miss Virtue with a clear idea in mind. "The inspiration I had when I started the Miss Virtue pageant was sharing beauty and confidence," she explains. She wanted to provide a platform for models to showcase their talent and boost their self-esteem. The pageant celebrates different body types, ages, and backgrounds. It focuses on inner beauty, personality, and empowerment rather than just appearance.

Khanyisile fell in love with modelling at a young age. "I fell in love with the glitz and glitter in it," she says. Her journey through various pageants has been rewarding. She has learned a great deal, made friends, socialised, and visited new places. She lives by a simple quote: "Sometimes we win, sometimes we learn—we are all born for greatness."

As a mentor, Khanyisile finds the greatest joy in watching her models grow. "The best part about being a mentor is probably seeing models that I mentored grow and gain confidence," she notes. She helps them develop skills, overcome challenges, and seize opportunities. Passing on her knowledge and experience feels special. She enjoys connecting with talented people and seeing them achieve their goals.

Khanyisile pushes hard for women's empowerment. She sees it as essential to equality. "Advocating for women's empowerment is crucial because it promotes equality, challenges stereotypes, and unlocks potential," she says. She focuses on ensuring women have access to education, jobs, and resources. She works to push back against outdated societal norms and biases. This approach boosts confidence and gives women more power in their decisions. Through Miss Virtue, Khanyisile makes a real difference for young women. The pageant helps them build self-assurance and public speaking skills. It encourages independence, self-expression, and leadership. Participants connect with like-minded people and professionals. "It has a positive and big impact on young women," she describes. "It helps them develop self-assurance and public speaking skills, encourages independence, self-expression, and leadership."

Khanyisile collaborates with organisations that address these issues. She joins them for awareness campaigns, workshops, and talks. Her work centres on education, economic empowerment, and tackling gender-based violence.

This year marks a big moment for her. Khanyisile has been nominated for the UA Pageantry Awards in two categories: Director of the Year 2026 and Positive Change of the Year 2026. She is also a finalist for Miss Stillimages 2026 and Miss Redefined South Africa 2026. "Being nominated is a huge achievement to me," she says. "My hard work is recognised, and I am one step closer to something big. I'm proud of myself, acknowledged for my effort, and inspired to push harder."

Balancing her roles as director, coach, model, and advocate takes effort. Khanyisile manages it by prioritising tasks, creating schedules, sticking to them, and staying organised. Leading a pageant organisation as a young woman brings challenges. She gives direction and manages a team that may include older or more experienced members. She finds it tough but manageable.

Her biggest supporters are her family, her pageant models, and their parents. They stand by her every step. Khanyisile knows what makes a strong pageant contestant. Confidence comes first—believing in yourself. Passion matters too—a genuine interest in the cause or platform. She values clear thinking and speaking. Contestants need to handle pressure and feedback well. Flexibility helps with shoots, schedules, and changes. Professionalism shows through reliability, punctuality, and hard work. Building a personal brand and online presence counts.

Her advice to aspiring models is straightforward. "Work on self-love and self-assurance," she says. "Understand the industry, trends, and best practices. Attend events, meet people, and build relationships, and don't compromise your values or look."

Looking ahead, Khanyisile wants to build something lasting. "I'd love to leave a legacy where pageantry and women's empowerment intersect," she shares. She envisions a platform that uplifts and inspires young women to be their best selves. It would be a space where confidence, kindness, and leadership come together. Every woman would feel seen, heard, and ready to make a difference. Through her work in pageantry and empowerment, she aims to spark belief in themselves, challenge old ideas, and spread understanding.

Khanyisile Tshabalala keeps moving forward, one step at a time, turning her passion into action for the next generation.

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Mieke is one of the young contestants hoping to earn the title of Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic, and for her the journey started with a simple suggestion from someone who believed in her potential. The young model says it was her teacher at Model Academy who first introduced the idea.

“My Model Academy teacher told me about the competition, and I decided to enter it,” Mieke explains. What started as a suggestion quickly turned into an exciting opportunity, and soon she found herself officially selected as a contestant.

When she received the news that SA Beauty Modeling Academy had chosen her as a finalist, Mieke says the moment caught her completely off guard. “I was shocked but extremely excited and grateful when I saw that I was chosen as a finalist,” she says. For someone still fairly new to the modeling world, the selection meant a lot and gave her even more motivation to work hard and give the competition her best effort.

Being photogenic is an important part of any modeling competition, especially one focused on magazine covers. For Mieke, the meaning goes beyond simply looking good in front of a camera. “To me being photogenic means mesmerising others when they look at a photo of you,” she explains. “Being photogenic is like the camera just flows with you when taking pictures.”

Preparing for a photoshoot is something Mieke takes seriously. She believes that both mental and physical preparation help create the best possible results when the camera starts clicking. “I prepare myself mentally by thinking about the vibe I want to create and give off when viewing the pictures afterwards,” she says. “Physically I practice all my poses I know I want pictures of but also throwing different poses in between so everything flows together and looks natural when it comes to the photoshoot.” With many contestants competing for the same title, Mieke believes her motivation and personality help her stand out. She says the competition is not only about winning but also about proving something to herself. “I think my drive to represent what I think should be the next CoverStar for PPMC Magazine South Africa sets me apart,” she explains.

“I think my features do fit the profile like my dark hair and light eyes but also who I am as a young South African citizen growing up and having not just signed up for this competition to win, but to prove to myself that I can do anything I set my mind to.”

Confidence plays a big role when competing for a magazine cover, but Mieke believes there is a healthy way to approach it. “Confidence is very important when competing for a magazine cover like PPMC Magazine South Africa but not in an arrogant type of way where you ‘know’ you’ll win,” she says.

#Finalist

Interview with Mieke Uys

Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition

Instead, she believes confidence should come from being comfortable with the work you have done. "Confidence in the way that you are self-assured that the photos you submitted look good and you are happy with them."

At the same time, Mieke understands that competitions can have different outcomes. "Also knowing that if you don't win in the end that this isn't the end of your modeling career and losing this competition also doesn't define your beauty," she adds.

The possibility of seeing her own face on the cover of PPMC Magazine South Africa is something that excites her deeply. "Winning this competition would make myself so proud knowing I worked hard for this and seeing my God given talent grow," Mieke says. "It would make me believe in myself even more and just make me so incredibly happy because younger me would have never even imagined it happening."

When asked to describe her personal modeling style, Mieke keeps it simple but meaningful. She chooses three words that reflect how she wants to present herself in front of the camera: "Unique. Delightful. Self-assured."

Although she is still early in her modeling journey, Mieke has already faced moments that challenged her confidence. She explains that her first experience on stage was nerve-racking. "I am still new at my modeling journey. I only began last year in October during my first competition at my school," she says. "I had no previous modeling experience before that, but I believed in myself and used the basic knowledge that I knew I already had and gave it my all."

Standing on stage in front of judges was intimidating at first. "I felt so much anxiety on stage that I could barely look at the judges but I just tried my best to keep calm and do what I knew how to do," she recalls. Despite those nerves, the result was a proud moment. "By doing that I won 2nd Princess in that competition which I'm very grateful for." Handling pressure is another skill she continues to develop, especially with prizes and titles involved. Her approach is simple. "The best way for me to handle pressure in this competition is just to keep calm and keep going," Mieke says. "To keep doing what I possibly can do in this competition, while believing in myself and praying that whatever happens I'll know God destined for it to be as it is."

Behind every contestant is usually a strong support system, and for Mieke that person is very clear. "My biggest supporter has definitely been my Mom during this entire competition," she says with a smile. "She has spread my photos everywhere and asked almost our entire town to vote for me. I am eternally grateful for her."

If she wins the overall title, Mieke already has clear plans for the future. With matric approaching this year, she hopes the opportunity will help her take the next step in the industry. "If I were to win the overall title to be the next CoverStar for PPMC Magazine, I would definitely use that platform to create an actual career of my modeling as time goes forward," she explains. "I will be matriculating this year and that would make a great opportunity next year to begin my modeling career in South Africa."

She hopes to go even further one day. "I would love to represent my country and make my dream come true," she says. Mieke has already collected a few achievements that give her confidence moving forward. "Last year during my school's Mr. and Miss pageant competition in October I won 2nd Princess," she shares. "Later in December I won 1st Princess in my town's modelling competition."

For this young model, the Cover Star SA journey is not only about a title. It is about growth, opportunity, and believing that a dream can slowly become reality.

Preview

Adily Volschenk

COVER STAR SA FINALIST

Printing Proof Not Approved

#Finalist

Interview with Adily Volschenk

Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition

Adily Volschenk has her sights set on the cover of PPMC Magazine South Africa. The young model from Standerton is one of the finalists in the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition, run by the SA Beauty Modeling Academy. She spoke openly about her journey, her drive, and what it would mean to win the title.

Adily says she decided to enter after seeing past winners on the pages of PPMC Magazine. "I was inspired to enter the Cover Star SA competition when I saw the previous years winners that featured on PPMC Magazine," she explains. "It is a dream of mine to be able to feature on such magazine."

When the news came that she had been selected as a contestant, the excitement hit hard. "When I received the news that I was one of the contestants, I was ecstatic," Adily says, "because now I stand a chance to fulfill my dream of becoming the face of Cover Star 2026.“ For Adily, being photogenic goes beyond a good angle in front of the camera. "I think being photogenic means to have a natural, ethereal but strong look," she describes.

Preparation is key for every shoot. Mentally, Adily focuses on staying strong and giving her all in each frame. Physically, she puts in the work ahead of time. "Before a photoshoot I prepare myself mentally to be strong and to give my best in every photo," she says. "Physically I practice different face expressions and poses to be able to suit different mood boards."

What makes her stand out among the other contestants? Adily points to her determination. "What sets me apart from the other contestants will probably be that if I put my head on something I go for it with full steam," she notes.

Confidence plays a big role in a competition like this. "Confidence is very important in any competition," Adily says, "because when entering a room with confidence you already stand out. It can take you places.“

The thought of her face on the cover brings a sense of pride. "I would be so proud of myself to see my face on the cover of PPMC Magazine," she admits. "It would be a big achievement, and it will prove to myself that I have what it takes."

Adily sums up her modeling style in three clear words: "My modeling style would be, confidence, elegance and captivating."

Like many in the industry, she has dealt with tough moments. "Challenges that I faced in my modeling journey would likely be other girls that was jealous," Adily shares. She handled it by staying above the drama. "I overcame this by being the bigger person and not letting it break me down."

Pressure does not faze her, even with cash prizes and the major title on the line. "I thrive under pressure, not letting it get me down," she says. "I just remind myself that everything will go as it should."

Through it all, one person has been by her side. "My biggest supporter throughout this competition would be my mother," Adily says warmly. "She stood by me with every step of the way, helping me build my character in my modeling journey."

If she takes home the overall title, Adily has clear plans for what comes next. "If I were to win the overall title it would help me be seen by modeling agencies," she explains. "It can give me more opportunities."

Adily already has some wins under her belt that she is happy to share. In 2025 she was crowned Miss SHS at Standerton High School, and later that year she claimed the title of Miss Sunshine in her town's local model competition.

As the voting continues for Cover Star SA 2026, Adily remains focused and ready. Her mix of drive, poise, and family support keeps her moving forward in a competitive field. For now, she keeps practicing her poses, building her confidence, and chasing that dream cover shot.

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#Finalist

Interview with Kay Knight

Mrs South Africa 2026 Semi-finalist

A story by:
Etienne Vermaak

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Kay Knight is stepping into the spotlight as a semi-finalist for Mrs South Africa 2026, but for Kay, this journey is about far more than a title. It is about growth, healing, and showing her children that no matter what life brings, it is still possible to follow your dreams.

When Kay first decided to enter the pageant, her reasons were both light-hearted and deeply personal. “When I was asked what my ‘why’ was, I said I wanted to come out and play with other ladies,” Kay says with a laugh. “But the serious answer is that I have five kids, three of them girls, and I wanted to show them that despite our past traumas, difficulties and setbacks, we can still achieve whatever we set our minds to.”

As the mother of a blended family, Kay says she wanted to shift how her daughters view women and motherhood. The journey quickly became a powerful moment of self-discovery. “This journey has been an eye opener for me,” Kay explains. “I am not a retrenched 45-year-old mother. No. I am an activist for strong, clear minds in women. It’s crazy because I didn’t even know what my purpose was until I joined.”

In the beginning, Kay kept her decision to enter the pageant quiet. Only her husband knew. The biggest challenge she faced was not the competition itself, but her own fear. “I didn’t care much for the outfits,” Kay says. “The fact that I didn’t wear or know how to apply makeup or even model didn’t bother me much. My greatest challenge was fear.”

Everything changed when she was selected as a semi-finalist. Suddenly, Kay knew she had to face that fear head-on. “When I was chosen as a semi-finalist, that is when I had to buck up and push fear of the unknown aside and start learning and unlearning,” she says.

One of the areas where Kay says she experienced the most growth is in her role as a mother. Through the pageant journey, she found herself reflecting on the way she was raised and how it shaped her own parenting.

"I am raising another woman's daughters, so I had to unlearn all the bad things I learned from my parents about raising kids," Kay explains. "I had a strict, militant, unaffectionate and cold way of raising my kids. I now intentionally remind myself to show love, be affectionate, nurturing, and speak with love and gentleness while still teaching discipline, values and principles."

Although Kay describes herself as an extrovert with people she knows well, speaking in front of crowds used to make her extremely shy. "I start laughing when I'm shy," she admits. "I'm not sure if it's a coping mechanism."

The Mrs South Africa platform helped her push past that fear. Kay now hosts events where she speaks to women about topics she cares about. "The Mrs SA platform is transformational in such a way that I am hosting events and speaking to ladies without even breaking out in a hot flush or laughter," she says. "At least not all the time. I am still a work in progress, but I cannot believe how far I've come."

When it comes to what makes a great pageant winner, Kay believes every woman brings something unique. "Each pageant winner has her own uniqueness that the world needs," she says. "For me, my uniqueness is my love for colour, laughter, being different, passionate, bold and kind."

Her bright personality also shows in her fashion choices. "I am bold in my love for colour in my dressing, bold and kind in my laughter," Kay says. "I am also passionate about making women aware that we must ensure mental wellness within ourselves and amongst each other because clarity is power."

Kay has always had a heart for helping others. One of the ways she has done this is through her church outreach programme where she cooks and feeds people in her community. However, she has also started thinking about long-term solutions. "I realised that feeding people once is not sustainable," Kay says. "I would love to start organic gardens at old age homes, drug rehabilitation centres and children's homes so people can feed themselves."

A powerful moment during her journey came during a workshop when Mrs South Africa Verushka Singh shared a message that stayed with her. "She said, 'Mrs South Africa didn't change me, it revealed all of who I am,'" Kay recalls.

"That is when the penny dropped for me. This pageant is revealing all of who Kay is." Handling the pressure of the competition is something Kay approaches in a simple but meaningful way. "I put in the work, then pray and leave it all at God's feet instead of stressing about it," she says.

Before entering the pageant world, Kay spent most of her career working in supply chain management, often in male-dominated environments. "That means safety boots, a hard hat and a reflective vest," she says. Her life story has also shaped her perspective. "I was a single mother of two for most of my life and then got married seven years ago and became a mother to five kids."

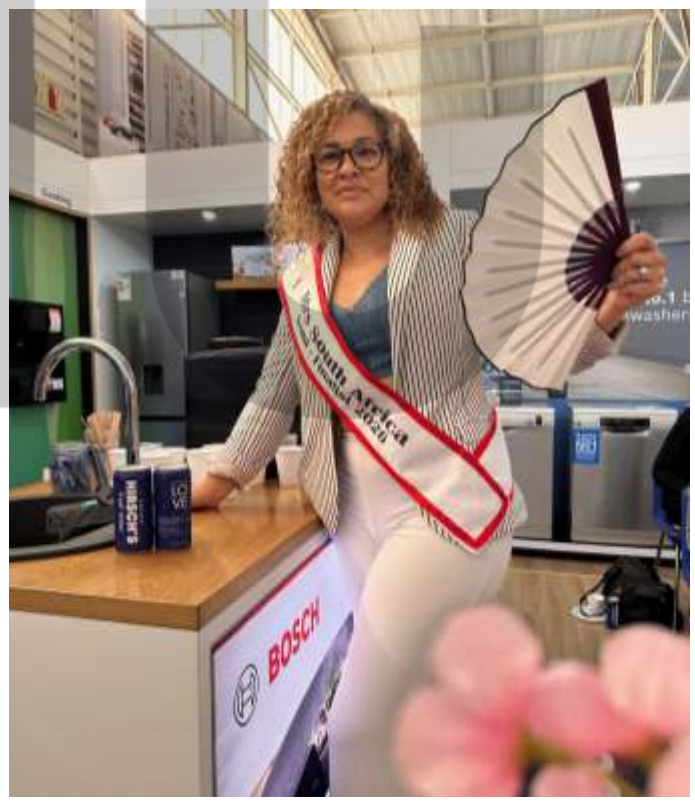
Through her own healing journey, Kay believes her kindness and supportive nature have helped set her apart. "My kindness, showing love and support, along with my not so serious side, has definitely set me apart," she says. For Kay, beauty is something deeply personal and simple. "I am beauty, you are beauty," she says. "Beauty is taking care of my skin, my body, my mind and my soul in a healthy way."

She also hopes to share an important message with those who may look up to her. "We all are scared or hurt in some way," Kay says. "It could be something we did or something someone else did to us, but healing is my responsibility. Make sure you heal so that when you meet people, you impact their lives in a positive way." Looking ahead, Kay hopes to use the opportunities that come with the pageant platform to encourage healing and empowerment among women. She also wants to promote sustainability and job creation. "I would love to teach sustainable ways of making sure every mouth is fed," she says. "I would also love to create employment opportunities for people who are unemployed."

One lesson the pageant has taught her stands above the rest. "Do not compare yourself to anyone else," Kay says. "Learn from one another but never compare." Her long-term dream is to start and run a business that helps create jobs for young people while also developing sustainable ways to feed and house communities. "Sometimes idle hands get into trouble," she says. "So giving people opportunities can make a big difference."

Kay also believes the pageant industry itself is evolving. "There used to be a certain type of woman chosen — thin, beautiful, long hair," she says. "I do see that this is changing. The real challenge is comparison."

She appreciates the message promoted by Mrs South Africa. "There is only one of you, so be you," Kay says. "Whatever that looks like, don't change who you are and don't compare yourself to anyone." For women thinking about entering a pageant one day, Kay has simple advice. "Don't wait," she says with a smile. "If the thought crosses your mind, just do it."



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Giverny Venter

PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 169

Mrs. Universe South Africa 2026

Facebook: Mrs. Universe SA 2026 Giverny
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#Pageant

Interview with Giverny Venter

Mrs. Universe South Africa 2026

Giverny Venter stands on stage as the newly crowned Mrs Universe South Africa 2026, a title she won in February at the Roodepoort Theatre. The 33-year-old from Bloubergstrand in Cape Town made history as the first woman from the Western Cape to claim the national crown. For Giverny, the victory goes far beyond the sash and the spotlight. It marks the end of years of doubt and the start of a bigger mission.

"I felt a very clear calling in my heart that this was the path I was meant to take," Giverny says. "It was one of those moments where I truly felt God guiding me toward something bigger than myself." As a child growing up in Bloemfontein, she watched Miss South Africa on television and dreamed of standing on a similar stage. But negative words from others stuck with her. People told her she wasn't pretty enough, too emotional, or didn't fit the mold. Those comments turned into doubts that held her back for years.

Through her own healing and work as a certified strategic life coach, Giverny challenged those old beliefs. She rediscovered her worth and decided to enter the pageant to prove something important. "Entering Mrs Universe South Africa was not just about a pageant," she explains. "It was about proving to myself and to other women that our past does not define our future." She adds that childhood dreams are often placed in our hearts for a reason.

Giverny's life has taken sharp turns. Born in Bloemfontein, she faced a difficult and abusive family environment as a young girl. She was separated from her mother early on and left home at 13. She moved to Cape Town and had to grow up fast, building a life on her own. Those hard years taught her independence and the value of healing.

Today she turns those experiences into tools to help others. "They taught me the importance of healing and self-belief," she says. "Today I use my journey, my voice, and my work to help others understand that their past does not define their future, and that it is always possible to rebuild your life with purpose and hope." As a wife and mother, Giverny balances family with her career. She works as a strategic performance life coach and has written several journals to help people build better habits, find clarity, and reach their goals.

She is also developing one for children to build confidence and emotional awareness early. In the crypto world, she supports influencer Sheldon the Sniper as his executive assistant and MC, and she hosts workshops with him. She has always loved entertainment, presenting, and being in front of the camera.

The Mrs Universe South Africa platform holds special meaning for Giverny. It focuses on raising awareness about domestic violence, a cause that hits close to home. "It reflects parts of my own life journey," she says. She wants to highlight a side of abuse that often goes unnoticed: the harm children suffer in their own homes. "Many conversations focus on violence between adults, but one of the most damaging and hidden forms of domestic violence is the abuse that children experience within their homes," Giverny explains. "Through my voice and this platform, I want to advocate for those children who often don't have a voice of their own."

Her main message is clear and direct. "Everything in life is a choice," she says. "No matter what circumstances we come from or what challenges life places in front of us, we always have the power to choose how we respond." She wants women and children who feel powerless to know they can rewrite their stories. "Your circumstances may shape you, but they never have to limit who you can become."

The journey to the crown helped Giverny grow in big ways. "This journey has not only given me my confidence back, but it has also reignited a spark within me that I felt I had lost many years ago," she says. It reminded her of her energy, passion, and purpose. She now sees new ways to make an impact.

Support came from key people. Professionally, Danielle Diederiks from Let's Get Reel Studios in the Western Cape stood by her as her only sponsor. "They believed in me every step of the way," Giverny says. At home, her husband and daughter were her biggest cheerleaders. "Their love, belief in me, and constant encouragement reminded me every day why I started this journey," she adds.

Balancing everything is not about perfect balance, Giverny believes. "I actually believe the idea of 'perfect balance' is a myth," she says. As a life coach, she focuses on priorities and seasons in life. She gives full attention to what matters most right now, knowing other areas will have their turn.

One challenge during the process was comparison. "We all have that little voice inside us that questions our worth or makes us feel we aren't enough," she admits. She overcame it by embracing her uniqueness and trusting her own path. "What is meant for me will always find me," she says.

Giverny describes a strong titleholder as authentic, accountable, and focused on lifting others. She hopes to use her platform for real change, especially for vulnerable children. She plans to start a foundation to speak at schools, distribute her journals, and fund safe houses and community support in underprivileged areas.

To married women dreaming of pageants, her advice is straightforward. "Just do it," she says. "Don't let doubts, fears, or the idea that 'you're too busy' or 'it's too late' hold you back." Looking forward, Giverny is excited about her foundation, growing her media and presenting work, and becoming a major motivational speaker.

She dreams of being the next big name in personal development from South Africa, creating resources to help people live with confidence and purpose. For her, this title is about building a legacy that inspires others for years to come.

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Talisa Naidoo

After a memorable night at the Miss Royal Jewel of South Africa 2026, Talisa Naidoo reflects on placing Second Runner-Up and using her platform to inspire confidence and empowerment.

#Pageant

Interview with Talisa Naidoo

Miss Royal Jewel of SA 2026 2nd Runner-up

Talisa Naidoo beams with pride as she reflects on her big night at Miss Royal Jewel of South Africa 2026. When her name was called as Second Runner-Up, the 22-year-old felt a rush of emotion. "It was a moment filled with overwhelming emotion and gratitude," she says. "Standing on that stage, surrounded by so many talented and inspiring women, I felt an incredible sense of pride and accomplishment. All the hard work, preparation, and dedication that went into the journey suddenly became worth it in that very moment."

The evening brought even more joy. Talisa also won the Public Choice Award and was named a Brand Ambassador for the pageant. These honors touched her deeply. "The Public Choice Award was especially meaningful because it reflected the love and support from people who believed in me and took the time to vote and stand behind my journey," she explains. "It reminded me that authenticity, kindness, and staying true to who you are can truly resonate with others." As Brand Ambassador, she sees it as "an honor that I hold very close to my heart," a chance to represent the pageant's values and inspire others.

Talisa, from Durban's Chatsworth area, grew up loving performance and creativity. "From a young age, I have always been drawn to the world of performance and creativity, which helped shape my confidence and love for being on stage," she says. She views pageantry as more than beauty—it's about purpose and using your voice to empower people.

Entering Miss Royal Jewel of South Africa felt right. "What inspired me to enter was the opportunity to grow, challenge myself, and be part of a platform that celebrates confidence, purpose, and empowerment," Talisa notes. "I have always admired how pageantry brings together strong and inspiring women who use their voices to make a difference in their communities."

The most special part for her was the connections she made. "One of the most memorable moments was having the opportunity to meet and connect with so many incredible women from different provinces across the country," she recalls. "Each contestant brought her own unique story, culture, and perspective, which made the experience so enriching and inspiring." Those bonds turned the competition into a celebration of unity and diversity.

Her biggest supporters have been constant. "Throughout my journey, my biggest supporters have truly been God and my mom," Talisa says. Her faith kept her grounded, while her mother offered endless encouragement and stood by her through every step.

Challenges came along the way, like handling pressure and self-doubt among so many strong competitors. "There were moments of self-doubt and nerves," she admits. "Balancing everything while still staying confident and focused was definitely a challenge at times." She pushed through by focusing on her reasons for starting, trusting her abilities, and leaning on her faith and family. "Instead of letting the pressure overwhelm me, I used it as motivation to grow, push myself further, and give my best on stage."

As Brand Ambassador, Talisa wants to spread a clear message. "The message I hope to share is one of confidence, empowerment, and self-belief," she says. "I want young women to know that their voice, their story, and their unique talents matter." She hopes to show that stepping out of comfort zones and staying true to yourself can lead to big things.

Talisa believes a strong contestant blends authenticity with the ability to connect sincerely. "Beyond the external elegance, it is her ability to communicate with sincerity and heart that truly connects her to the community," she explains. "An inspiring queen is a servant leader who views her crown not as a trophy of personal achievement, but as a powerful tool to empower and uplift those around her."

Preparation took serious effort. Talisa focused on fitness, healthy eating, practicing her walk, posture, and speaking skills. "This comprehensive approach allowed me to step onto the stage not just as a contestant, but as a prepared and purposeful representative," she says.

The Public Choice Award showed her the strength of her support base. "It says that my message resonated far beyond the stage and that I have a dedicated army of supporters who believe in my vision," Talisa notes. "Their votes were more than just numbers—they were tokens of trust and belief in my potential to lead."

To young girls dreaming of pageants, she offers straightforward advice. "Do not enter a pageant to be chosen by a panel; enter to choose yourself, to claim your voice, your space, and your power," Talisa urges. "Polish your mind as much as your walk, and fuel your body with the respect it deserves. When you step into the light, seek to be the most present, purposeful, and powerful version of yourself."

Through this experience, she learned real confidence means moving forward despite fear. "True confidence is not the absence of fear, but the decision to proceed in spite of it," she says. "Self-belief is a muscle that must be trained daily through discipline and intentionality."

Looking forward, Talisa has clear plans. She wants to take her platform to bigger stages nationally and internationally. Her biggest dream ties back to her passion for dance. "My most profound dream is rooted in my life as a dancer," she shares. "I am determined to establish a dance academy in honor of my late guru, mentor and inspiration, Fabian Pillay." Through it, she hopes to pass on the confidence Fabian gave her to the next generation of dancers.

Talisa's journey shows what happens when hard work meets heart. From Chatsworth to the national stage, she has turned her story into inspiration for others.

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BRITTANY MCCORMICK

A powerful story of courage and determination shows how one woman turned life's toughest challenges into a message of hope and empowerment.

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#Inspire

Interview with Brittany McCormick

The Impossible Becomes Achievable

Brittany McCormick stood on stage for one of her recent corporate keynotes, delivering her Overcomer talk. She shared her personal journey openly. What happened next stayed with her. During the meet-and-greet afterward, people approached with deep questions. Brittany noticed a shift in the room. "People were no longer just listening to my story—they were reflecting on their own lives and realizing that what once felt impossible might actually be possible," she says.

For Brittany, born three months premature and living with cerebral palsy quadriplegia, that moment captured the heart of her work. She spent months in intensive care as a newborn. Doctors and others thought her life would stay limited. Yet Brittany turned those early challenges into proof that limits can change. Today she travels as an international keynote speaker, bringing her message to businesses, teams, and events.

Brittany defines real impact simply. "Impact is not just applause," she explains. "Impact is what people do differently afterwards." After one session, several professionals told her they started handling work pressure in new ways. They stopped viewing obstacles as setbacks. Instead they saw them as chances to grow. When listeners leave thinking differently about their own challenges, Brittany knows her words landed. Her core message hits home with business crowds. "Impossible is often just a word people accept too quickly," she says. Brittany's life backs that up. She faced long odds from the start, but she kept pushing forward with perseverance, faith, and determination. That path shows audiences what can happen when people refuse to stop at "impossible."

One story stands out for her. After a speaking session, a professional walked up. He told Brittany, "I walked in here thinking my work challenges were overwhelming. After hearing your story, I realize my mindset is the real challenge." He left ready to face his obstacles in a fresh way. "That moment reminded me why sharing my story matters," Brittany recalls.

Her own life taught her perseverance from the beginning. Every small step forward took patience and effort. "Because of that journey, when I speak about perseverance, it comes from real experience—not theory," she says. Brittany passes on practical lessons she learned along the way. Focus on ability, not limitation. Keep moving forward, even when progress feels slow. Strength grows through perseverance. These ideas help people meet challenges with a clearer view.

Hearing Brittany's story prompts a change in how people see their own difficulties. They move from asking "Why is this happening to me?" to "What can I learn from this?" That simple switch, she says, changes everything.

Feedback often surprises her in the best way. "I thought I was coming to hear a motivational story, but I left seeing my life differently," is a comment she hears regularly. It shows her the message reaches beyond her own experience. It helps people find hope and courage again.

For high-stakes international keynotes, Brittany prepares with purpose in mind. She reminds herself why she speaks—to encourage others, share hope, and demonstrate the power of determination. "When I focus on that purpose, the pressure disappears," she notes.

Her faith shapes it all. As a Child of God, Brittany finds meaning and strength in her identity. It gives her courage to keep sharing a message of hope and determination.

Every stage she stands on shows ability over disability. What once seemed like it would define her future now opens doors to reach people worldwide. Brittany wants audiences to adopt one key mindset: Do not let circumstances define your possibilities. Challenges can become the source of real strength.

Building her speaking career brought its own hurdles. Doubt crept in at times, and barriers appeared hard to cross. Brittany pressed on one step at a time, the same way she always has.

Now she looks ahead with clear passion. She wants to bring the Overcomer message to more people and organizations globally. "My goal is simple: To help people realize that their story, their challenges, and their perseverance can become their greatest strength," Brittany says.

Through her talks, Brittany continues to show that change starts with how people see their own lives. Her journey—from intensive care to international stages—proves the point every time she speaks.

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Mrs South Africa 2026 Semi-Finalist Shomaveni Govender Embraces Self-Discovery, Empowerment, and Authentic Beauty on Her Transformative Pageant Journey

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#Finalist

Meet Shomaveni Govender

Mrs South Africa 2026 Semi-finalist

A story by:
Etienne Vermaak

Shomaveni Govender, a semi-finalist in the Mrs South Africa 2026 pageant, stepped into the competition on a whim that turned into something much bigger. "For me it was embracing the unknown and pushing past comfort zones has been a transformative experience," she says, "allowing me to align with the person I aspire to be."

The journey started with a last-minute decision. With only hours left before the deadline, Shomaveni submitted her application. "I believe last-minute decisions can sometimes lead to the most incredible journeys," she explains, "and mine was no exception."

What followed was a rush of self-discovery, building confidence, and personal growth while juggling her job, family life, and pageant duties. Loved ones stood by her side, helping her manage time and stay focused. "With the unwavering support of loved ones, I've learned to prioritise my time, stay focused, and remain true to my purpose," she adds.

The pressure has been real, but Shomaveni sees it as fuel for change. "Stepping onto this stage was a turning point," she recalls. "It forced me to confront my fears, push past limits, and discover strengths I didn't know I had." Her confidence grew sharply. More than that, she stopped worrying about others' opinions and started concentrating on becoming her best self. "My confidence got a massive boost, but more importantly, I stopped sweating what people thought and started focusing on becoming the best me."

Shomaveni believes a pageant winner should show confidence, empathy, and a real drive to help others. "They should be a role model who inspires others to be their best selves," she says. For her, it's not about looks alone—it's inner strength, staying authentic, and lifting people up. "For me, it's about being authentic, staying true to my values, and empowering those around me to do the same." Her passion lies with women and children who need support. She wants to back education and empowerment efforts, such as literacy projects and skills workshops.

"As a platform holder, I'd love to partner with local organisations to amplify their impact, host events, and raise awareness about these important causes," she says. "It's about making a tangible difference."

One moment stands out from her time in the competition. Visiting Reddam school left a deep mark. "A poignant moment in my journey was visiting Reddam school, where I was overwhelmed by the warmth and energy of the children," she shares. "Sharing the morning with them and witnessing their smiles reaffirmed my purpose and reminded me why I'm committed to this path." The kids' joy reminded her of the real difference one person can make.

Handling the stress of being a semi-finalist comes down to keeping things in perspective. "Honestly, it's about balance and perspective," Shomaveni says. "I remind myself it's about the journey, not just the title." She controls what she can—her prep, her mindset, and how she carries herself—and leans on her support network.

What makes her stand out? "My unique blend of passion, authenticity, and resilience sets me apart," she notes. As a mom, a working professional, and someone who has faced tough times, she feels those experiences have shaped her into someone strong and ready to inspire. "I'm driven to uplift others, and I'm excited for my story to unfold."

To Shomaveni, beauty means confidence, kindness, and being real. "It's owning your story and radiating self-love," she says. She welcomes how beauty standards are changing to include more diversity. "Beauty standards are evolving, shifting towards inclusivity and diversity, celebrating individuality over conformity," she adds. "I'm thrilled we're embracing different shades, shapes, and stories."

For young people who might see her as a role model, her message is clear. "I'd say: Own your uniqueness, believe in yourself, and never give up on your dreams," she tells them. "Your story's still unfolding, and it's gonna be amazing. Surround yourself with positivity, stay true to who you are, and keep pushing forward."

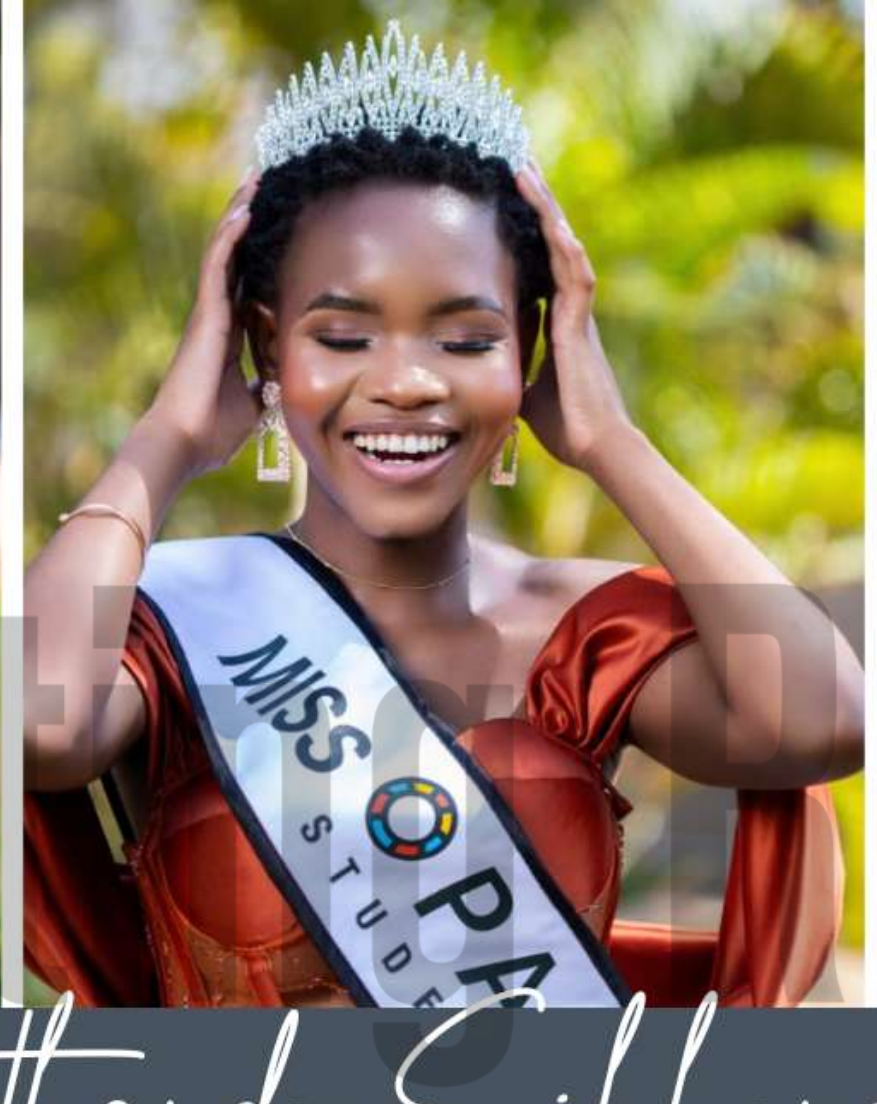
If she wins, Shomaveni plans to use the spotlight to push her causes harder. "Winning would be an incredible opportunity to amplify my platform and impact," she says. She would focus on women's empowerment and education, seek partnerships, and grow both personally and in her career.

Looking further ahead, her goals center on helping those on the edges of society, especially women and girls. "My long-term goal is to empower and uplift marginalized communities, particularly women and girls," she explains. "I'd love to establish programs and initiatives that provide education, skills training, and support." She wants to start a chain of kindness that keeps going.

The pageant world, she thinks, needs to keep opening up. "Embracing change and promoting inclusivity can revolutionize the industry," she says. "By celebrating diverse stories and voices, we can create a more authentic and inspiring space."

Her final piece of advice for anyone thinking about entering a pageant? "Do it!" she urges. "It's a journey of self-discovery and growth. Own your story, focus on what you want to achieve, and don't let anyone define your worth. It's about representing yourself and your values—be authentic, be bold, and shine."

PPMC Proof Reading



Nothando Sikhonde

MISS OPAL STUDENTS 2025/26

Reserved

#Pageant

Introducing Nothando Sikhonde

Miss Opal Students 2025/26

Nothando Sikhonde recently earned the title of Miss Opal Students 2025/2026, a moment she describes as deeply meaningful. “Being crowned Miss Opal Students 2025/2026 means being given the opportunity to learn, become and grow,” she says. “It means being entrusted to represent their brand.”

Her path to the crown felt empowering from the beginning. “The journey to becoming Miss Opal Students has been an empowering one,” Nothando explains. “It was filled with knowledge and growth, especially in self-branding, media appearances and building sustainable relationships.” The process pushed her out of her comfort zone and demanded good time management.

What made it easier was the strong support provided—no entry fees, wardrobe, makeup, transportation or other basics for models fell on the contestants. “It was also less stressful because there were no fees, wardrobe, makeup, transportation or other basic needs for models to cover,” she adds.

Now 22 and studying accounting, Nothando advocates for mental health and spirituality. Her focus on these areas comes from personal experience. “My lack of knowledge about mental health was the drive,” she recalls. “As a learner, I suffered from mental health issues and my experience showed me the gap in the educational system at the time.”

Many people around her thought she was faking or being lazy, unaware of the reality. After relocating to Gauteng, she gained understanding and saw the need to educate others. Those struggles also taught her about the spiritual side of life. “Mental health challenges made me realise that life is spiritual and that you must prioritise your spiritual wellness,” she says. She explains why mental health awareness matters so much for students. The move from high school to university brings intense pressure—relocating to a new province, managing life independently and coping with academic demands.

“Adapting to varsity can be really overwhelming,” Nothando points out, “and not taking care of your mental health during that period can have a long-term effect.” Without early knowledge, many students miss the signs and delay asking for help. Proper education, she believes, can lower rates of suicide, suicide attempts, substance abuse and underperformance due to poor coping.

Spirituality guides Nothando’s daily life and her approach to leadership. “My spirituality helps me understand that my energy speaks for me in the room before I even speak,” she says. It allows her to see the deeper meaning behind events, empathise with others and spread love and kindness regardless of someone’s status.

Balancing a demanding accounting degree with pageantry duties remains difficult. “As a student doing an academically intense course, I still struggle to find balance,” she admits. The Opal Students Foundation supports her by scheduling pageantry commitments, which helps her stay focused on schoolwork and manage her time effectively.

The biggest challenge has been juggling both worlds when deadlines clash. “There were times when both were demanding at the same time, leading to sleepless nights,” she shares. “There were moments when it felt draining and I wanted to quit, but my purpose kept me going.” For Nothando, “being the change you want to see in the world” means leading by example. “It means walking in the shoes first before you tell others how to tie their shoelaces,” she explains. “It means inspiring through actions, proving it is doable and guiding those willing to climb.”

She uses her platform to drive impact through student engagement programmes and social media. Her flagship initiative is the “I am not next” mental health programme, which aims to raise awareness and provide support for students and learners. Pageantry has strengthened her confidence. “Pageantry has helped me believe in my truth and speak it boldly, stand for what I believe in and love myself as I am,” she says.

To young women facing self-worth or mental health struggles, Nothando offers straightforward encouragement. “You start healing once you acknowledge your struggles and become intentional about working on them,” she tells them.

“You cannot control what happens to you, but you can control how you respond. Ask for help—people are willing to help, they just don’t know you need it.” She reminds those doubting their worth that they are enough. “They are fearfully and wonderfully made. Earth would be incomplete without them. They are here for a reason—that is their power.”

Her biggest inspiration comes from her own reflection. “I am inspired by the person I see when I look in the mirror—her experience and courage drive me,” she says.

In five years, Nothando sees herself excelling in her accounting career while creating more positive change in pageantry. Her final message to students is simple and powerful: “You are more capable than you think. Give yourself grace and keep striving. Take care of your mental health and your spirit.”

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Blackbird Visuals *Photography*

Carlè Melville's path into photography began with something unexpected: a motorcycle and a search for a new creative spark. Today, the Somerset West photographer is building her brand, Blackbird Visuals, while capturing bold and cinematic portraits that reflect both people and place.

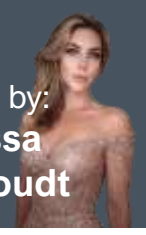
Carlè explains that the story behind her photography business started with something she loved deeply. "It's actually a beautiful story," Carlè says. "My partner and I used to own a gorgeous Honda Blackbird which gave me so much joy and a sense of freedom. We called her Stella." When that chapter of her life came to an end, Carlè began searching for a new passion that could bring the same excitement and creativity into her life. "Since then, I was searching for something new to enjoy, and that's how I started Blackbird Visuals," she says. "I've always been a creative soul, so getting back into photography and pursuing it as a career here in Somerset West is definitely something I'll do for the rest of my life, because I truly love what I do."

Carlè focuses mainly on portrait photography, working with individuals and couples who want something unique and expressive. She describes her style as strong and dramatic. "I specialize in individual and couple portraits," Carlè explains.

#Phata

Interview with Carlè Melville

Cinematic Photography Driven By Passion



A story by:
Melissa Nieuwoudt

“My style is bold, moody, editorial, and cinematic.” For Carlè, photography is not just about taking a picture. It is about capturing emotion and atmosphere. “Being able to shoot at beautiful locations, connect with people, and bring a photograph to life is what drives me to continue doing what I do,” she says.

Turning a hobby into a business felt like a natural step. Carlè says entrepreneurship was always part of her plan. “Becoming a business owner was always part of the plan for me,” she says. “The Blackbird was my inspiration and the little nudge I needed to pursue photography as a career.” From that idea, Blackbird Visuals was born, and Carlè began working toward establishing herself in the local photography scene.

Like many people starting a creative business, Carlè admits that the journey comes with challenges. As a newcomer in the industry, she is focused on building connections and growing her client base. “To be honest, I’m still a beginner, so my focus right now is networking and building a client base,” Carlè says.

She admits that learning photography can sometimes feel overwhelming. “Since I am new to photography, I do get frustrated like many others, but I always remind myself patience is key.” Carlè also respects the talent of other photographers in the region. “We have amazing photographers here, each with their own unique style. I’m not here to compete, I’m here to create my own art and grow Blackbird Visuals.” Planning and communication are important parts of her work. Carlè explains that every photoshoot begins with a conversation. “I usually get a vision of what I want to photograph and discuss it with the person beforehand who wants to do a shoot with me,” she says. Once the client understands the idea and the booking process is complete, the shoot moves forward.

For those hoping to follow a similar path, Carlè offers practical advice. “Borrow or buy a camera and practice, practice, practice,” she says. She also encourages beginners to learn as much as possible. “Offer to do free shoots and join photography classes to gain knowledge and experience. You can also take photography courses, as many as you want.”

Carlè’s artistic inspiration also comes from powerful imagery created by others. One photograph in particular left a lasting impression on her. “There’s a beautiful portrait I once saw of a Khoisan girl sitting next to a cheetah in the Kalahari desert,” she says. The image was taken by Canadian filmmaker and photographer Gregory Colbert.

“His work is absolutely stunning, and that striking image of the girl and the exotic cat really spoke to me.” She also enjoys studying black and white portrait photography. “I love looking at other photographers’ black and white portraits of people, a style I’m drawn to and often use in my own work.”

Living in Somerset West also plays a big role in Carlè’s creative process. “I love how close Somerset West is to the ocean and nature,” she says. “The beaches and mountains here are exquisite.” The surrounding landscapes often become part of the atmosphere she captures in her work.

Carlè also keeps up with trends and ideas through social media. “When I’m relaxing at home with my cats, I usually go on TikTok and Pinterest to stay updated with anything related to photography,” she says.

When working with clients, Carlè focuses on creating a relaxed environment. “I want my clients to feel relaxed and enjoy the shoot as much as I do,” she says. “It’s their moment to shine, and some, though not all, tend to forget how truly beautiful they are.” She believes connection plays a key role in a successful shoot. “I discuss and plan the shoot beforehand. I usually ask a few questions to get to know a person and explain what they can expect, because connection is extremely important to me.”

One of Carlè’s favourite shoots so far took place at Glentana Beach. “Definitely Melissa Nieuwoudt’s shipwreck shoot,” she says. “It was such a fun adventurous shoot, and I love Melissa’s energy. She’s like an AC/DC concert – always on the move and the good kind of crazy.”

Looking ahead, Carlè hopes to keep growing both creatively and professionally. “I want to continue learning and gaining as much knowledge and experience as I can,” she says. One dream stands out clearly for the future. “I would also love to have my own beautiful little studio one day.”

Through her work, Carlè also hopes to show others the beauty of her hometown. “People from different locations within South Africa and overseas get to see how beautiful Somerset West and the surrounding areas truly are,” she says. And if someone wants to work with her? Carlè keeps it simple and friendly. “Invite me for coffee and good food.”

Photographs Reserved

#Finalist

Interview with Erynn Bailey

Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition

At 25 years old, Erynn Bailey from Ravensmead in Cape Town is stepping into the spotlight with determination, faith, and a strong belief in self-acceptance. As a contestant in the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition, Erynn is using the opportunity to celebrate body confidence and show that every woman deserves to feel beautiful in her own skin.

Erynn first discovered her love for modelling while attending Ace Models in Durbanville. Through her journey there, she says she learned more than just how to pose for a camera. "I learned a lot about self-love and confidence," Erynn explains. "Modelling helped me understand that you must accept who you are and be proud of your body."

Her decision to enter the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition came from a dream that has been growing inside her for years. "The thing that inspired me to enter the competition is seeing a lot of curve models on the runway," Erynn says. "I want to see myself on Vogue magazine one day. That has always been a dream for me."

When she received the news that she had been selected as a contestant by SA Beauty Modeling Academy, the moment felt almost unreal. "I felt amazing just to see my picture there as a contestant," Erynn says with excitement. "It was such an honour for me that SA Beauty Modeling Academy accepted me as one of their contestants."

For Erynn, being photogenic is not just about looking good in front of the camera. She believes it is about being comfortable with who you are and treating yourself with kindness. "Being photogenic for me is to always be yourself and accept your body," Erynn explains.

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#Finalist

Interview with Erynn Bailey

Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition

Before every photoshoot, Erynn prepares herself carefully, both mentally and physically. Organisation plays a big role in helping her stay calm and confident. “I always put my outfits together the day before the photoshoot,” she says. “And I remind myself that I can do it. I tell myself, ‘You’ve got this. You are brave, powerful and bold.’”

As a curve model, Erynn believes her confidence and willingness to face challenges set her apart from other contestants. “It’s mostly my body because I’m a curve model that’s not shy to face any challenge,” she says. “Win or lose, it’s about the opportunity and trying to be the best version of myself.”

Confidence, she says, is essential when competing for a magazine cover such as PPMC Magazine South Africa. “It is very important to show who you really are,” Erynn explains. “You must show people that you are never too old to try something new.”

The idea of seeing her own face on the cover of a national magazine would mean everything to her. “To be honest, it would mean the world to me,” Erynn says. “I have always had a dream of seeing myself on a magazine one day.” When asked to describe her personal modelling style in just three words, Erynn answers without hesitation: “Bold, powerful and brave.”

Her journey in modelling has not always been easy. One of the biggest challenges she faced happened during her first international competition with Ace Models International in Johannesburg about two years ago. Standing in front of a huge audience, Erynn suddenly realised how big the stage was and felt overwhelmed.

“I couldn’t walk the stage because I had no idea it would be so big,” she recalls. “My coach jumped onto the stage and walked with me. There were about 5,000 people cheering for me.” Instead of letting that moment stop her, Erynn chose to face her fears again. Last year she returned to the same international competition determined to prove to herself that she could do it.

“I went back to Ace Models International and walked that stage alone with no help,” she says proudly. “I almost didn’t make it again, but God was faithful. Sometimes you think you can’t do something, but you actually can.”

Throughout her journey, Erynn says support has come from both expected and unexpected places. “Sometimes strangers support you more than your own family,” she admits. “But my mom has always been my biggest supporter.”

Her mother, along with her grandmothers and brothers, have stood beside her during every competition. Their encouragement continues to motivate her to keep pushing forward.

Despite the pressure that comes with competing for titles and prize money, Erynn tries to stay focused on belief in herself. “Any competition has pressure, especially when there are big titles at stake,” she says. “But you just have to keep believing in yourself and believe that you can do it.”

If she were to win the overall title, Erynn already knows how she would like to use the opportunity. Giving back to her community is very important to her. “I would love to thank all my supporters for believing in me,” she says. “I would also like to donate some of the money to shelters near me and share my story with people who watch my journey.”

Erynn has already achieved several accomplishments in her modelling career. These include placing as first runner-up for Ace Model of the Year, first runner-up Pageant Model of the Year, first runner-up Runway Model of the Year, first runner-up Public Speaker, and second runner-up Photogenic. She also celebrated graduating with the Class of 2025 and earned recognition as an Ace Models International runway model.

Through every step of her journey, Erynn continues to chase her dream while encouraging others to believe in themselves too. For her, modelling is not just about photos and titles. It is about confidence, courage, and reminding others that beauty comes in many different shapes and sizes.

Reserved

Bianca Jansen van Vuuren

Grade 11 learner Bianca Jansen van Vuuren is turning her childhood dream of modelling into reality as she steps confidently into the spotlight as a Cover Star SA 2026 finalist.

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#Finalist

Meet Bianca Jansen van Vuuren

Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition

Bianca Jansen van Vuuren has always pictured herself walking the runway and lighting up magazine pages. The Grade 11 learner from a quiet town in South Africa turned that dream into action in 2025 when a modelling school opened nearby. She signed up for full-time classes right away and started working toward a career in modelling and photography.

When Cover Star SA 2026 was announced, Bianca saw her chance. “I saw Cover Star SA 2026 as a wonderful opportunity to help me enter the fashion world, and I decided to enter to make my dream come true,” she says.

The moment she learned she had made the finals came as a complete surprise. “I was very surprised and so happy that I was chosen,” Bianca recalls. “Now I am extremely excited about the competition. It is an honour for me and I am grateful for the opportunity.”

For Bianca, looking good in photos runs deeper than makeup or perfect lighting. “Being photogenic is more than just having a pretty face with makeup. For me, it is about what you express — your personality should be visible through your photos,” she explains.

She prepares for every shoot with care. The night before, she focuses on her skin, gets plenty of sleep and cuts back on screen time. “I make an extra effort with my skincare and I make sure I get enough sleep the night before so that I can look fresh and well rested. I also limit my screen time so that I can stay calm and focused during the session,” she says.

What makes Bianca stand out is her honest, down-to-earth style. “I am natural and a farm girl — what you see is what you get,” she notes. “I believe my determination, positivity, and dreams set me apart.”

She offers clear advice to anyone hoping to follow the same path. “I believe confidence is very important and it can be seen in a photo. When you pose for a photo, you cannot be shy or withdrawn. At the same time, you must remain humble and not become arrogant, because that can also be seen,” Bianca says. If she wins the title, her joy would be hard to contain. “I would be on cloud nine. It would be such a great honour for me — a dream come true,” she shares with a laugh.

In just three words, Bianca describes herself as elegant, natural and confident. What keeps her pushing forward is simple but strong. “The realization that my dream can come true, but that I have to work hard for it. I had to keep believing in myself. I could not underestimate myself or give up on my dreams, even when things became difficult,” she says.

To Bianca, success is not only about prizes. “I feel good even if I do not necessarily win the prize, because the real victory for me is that I participated and grew during the process. The top of a ladder is reached step by step. Rome was not built in a day — success is achieved over time,” she points out. Her biggest cheerleaders have been steady from the start. “My family, friends, social media, and modelling coaches,” she lists.

As a young learner, Bianca wants to use any spotlight she gains to lift others up. “I am a Grade 11 learner and I would use this opportunity to be a role model and inspire young people to be themselves and believe in themselves. I would also use the opportunity to approach modelling agencies,” she says.

Her journey already carries a string of titles that show her steady climb. She was crowned Miss Tiny Glitter Queen in 2015, Miss Kalie de Haas Junior in 2018, Miss Lente in 2021, and Miss Sonskyn 2nd Princess in 2025. Now she stands as a Cover Star SA 2026 finalist.

Bianca keeps her eyes on the future with quiet excitement. She knows the road takes time and effort, but every step feels like part of the plan she has held since she was little. For this farm girl with big dreams, the story is just beginning.

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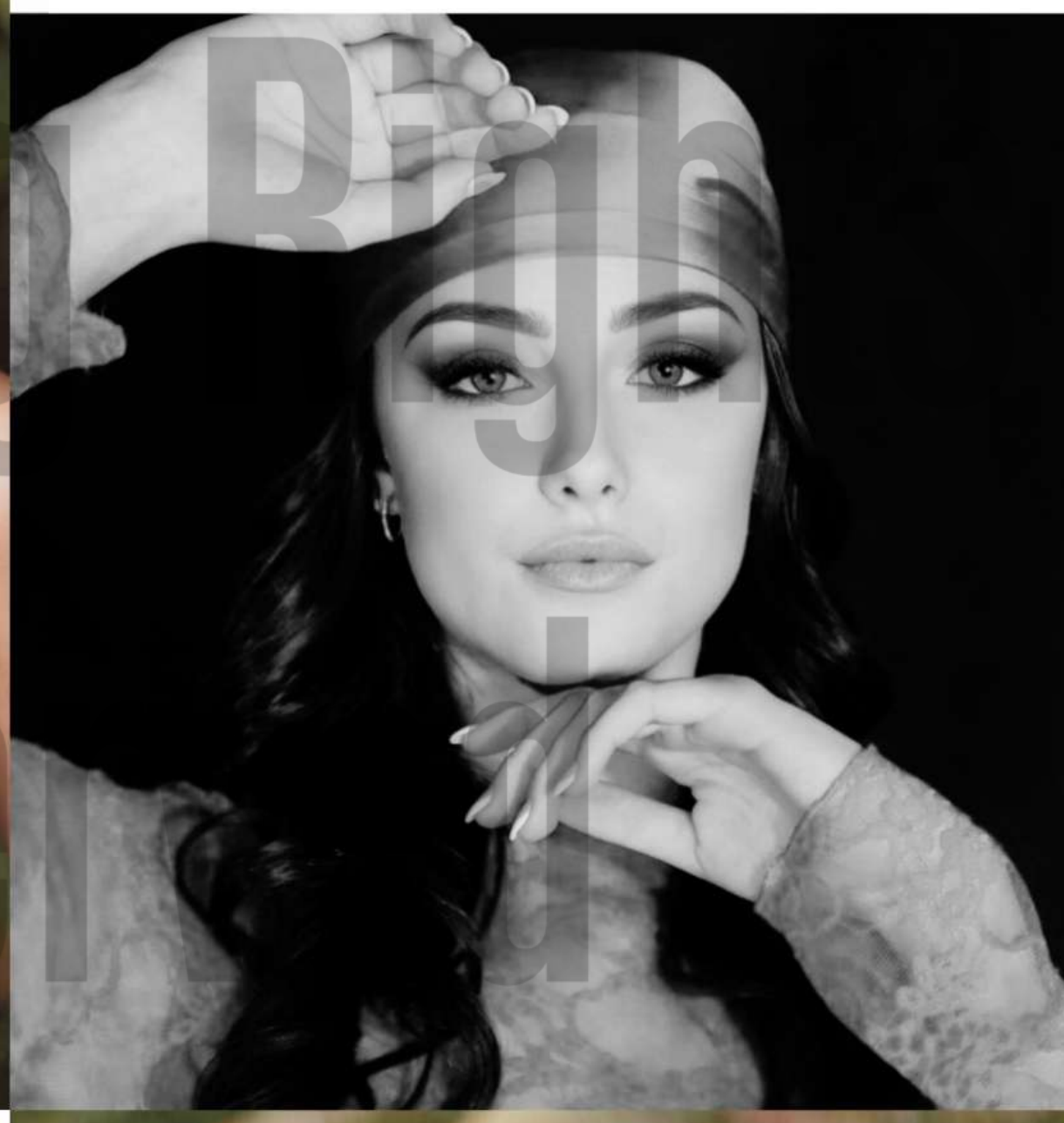
Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition



Lienke van Rooyen

#Finalist

Interview with Lienke van Rooyen

Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic Competition

Lienke van Rooyen has always loved modeling. She enjoys expressing herself through photos, capturing moments that show her true self. When the chance came to enter the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition, she saw it as the right step forward.

“I’ve always loved modeling and expressing myself through photos,” Lienke says. “Entering the Cover Star SA 2026 Photogenic competition felt like the perfect opportunity to challenge myself, grow my confidence, and take a step closer to my dreams in the modeling industry.”

The competition, run in partnership with modeling academies and aimed at spotting fresh faces for magazine covers, drew many hopefuls. Lienke made it through the selection process and became a finalist in the teen category.

When she heard the news, the excitement hit hard. “I felt incredibly excited and grateful,” she recalls. “Being selected made me feel proud of how far I’ve come and motivated me to work even harder. It was such an amazing opportunity and a big moment for me.”

For Lienke, being photogenic goes beyond a pretty face in a picture. “To me, being photogenic means being able to express confidence, emotion, and personality through a photo,” she explains. “It’s not just about looking good in pictures, but about telling a story and showing who you are.”

She prepares carefully for every shoot. Physically, she focuses on rest and hydration to stay sharp. Mentally, she keeps a positive mindset. “Before a photoshoot, I like to make sure I’m well prepared and confident,” Lienke says. “I get enough rest, stay hydrated, and think positively. Mentally, I remind myself to enjoy the experience and just be myself in front of the camera.”

What makes her stand out among the other contestants? Lienke points to her drive and approach. “I believe my determination, energy, and passion for modeling set me apart,” she says. “I’m always willing to learn and improve, and I bring my own personality and confidence into every photo.” Confidence plays a central role in her work. “Confidence is extremely important because it shows through in every photo,” Lienke notes. “When you believe in yourself, it reflects in the way you pose, your expressions, and the overall energy you bring to the shoot.”

Lienke loves to serve as a role model for other teens who doubt themselves. She wants to encourage them to give modeling and exposure a try and to enjoy the process along the way. Her own quick progress—from starting in January 2025 to reaching finalist status—shows that starting out shy does not have to hold anyone back.

Her journey in modeling started recently, in January 2025. She began as a very shy person but trained with ACE Models, a well-known modeling academy in South Africa. Over time, she transformed. “Had great achievements as an ACE model from really shy to a confident model,” she shares. “Only started modelling Jan 2025!”

She also earned recognition from ICE Johannesburg, a modeling or industry group that spotted her potential early on.

Along the way, she has faced real challenges. The biggest one was building belief in herself and stepping beyond what felt safe. “One of the biggest challenges has been believing in myself and stepping out of my comfort zone,” Lienke says. “Over time, I’ve learned that confidence grows with experience, and every opportunity helps me improve and become stronger.”

Pressure does not faze her much anymore. She handles it by staying grounded. “I try to stay focused and remind myself why I started,” she explains. “Instead of thinking about the pressure, I focus on doing my best and enjoying the experience.” Her biggest supporters include her family and friends, who encourage her every step. “My biggest supporters have been my family and friends,” Lienke says. “They constantly encourage me, believe in me, and motivate me to keep pushing forward.”

A key figure in her growth is her coach, Yvette Muller, a Mrs South Africa 2025 finalist and director of ACE Models Helderberg. Yvette has been instrumental in supporting, inspiring, and motivating Lienke throughout the process. As an experienced model coach and pageant competitor herself—who proved it’s never too late to chase dreams—Yvette helps Lienke build the confidence and skills needed to shine.

If she wins the overall title in Cover Star SA, Lienke has clear plans. “If I win, I would love to use the platform to grow in the modeling industry and inspire other young people to believe in themselves and follow their dreams,” she says.

Her recent successes add to her momentum. She is a semi-finalist in Miss Teen Universe Western Cape, set for May, and a finalist for Royal International Miss SA, with competition in September. These pageants build on her growing experience and open more doors. Lienke describes her personal modeling style in three simple words: confident, expressive, and elegant.

Lienke’s story shows what happens when someone starts late but commits fully. In less than a year and a half, she moved from beginner to finalist in major competitions. With guidance from Yvette and steady support from those close to her, she keeps her focus: keep learning, stay true to herself, and enjoy each step.

As voting continues for Cover Star SA finalists, Lienke keeps her energy high. She knows the road ahead holds more shoots, more growth, and more chances to share her story through photos—and to show other teens that they can do the same. For now, she is grateful for the journey so far and excited about what comes next.

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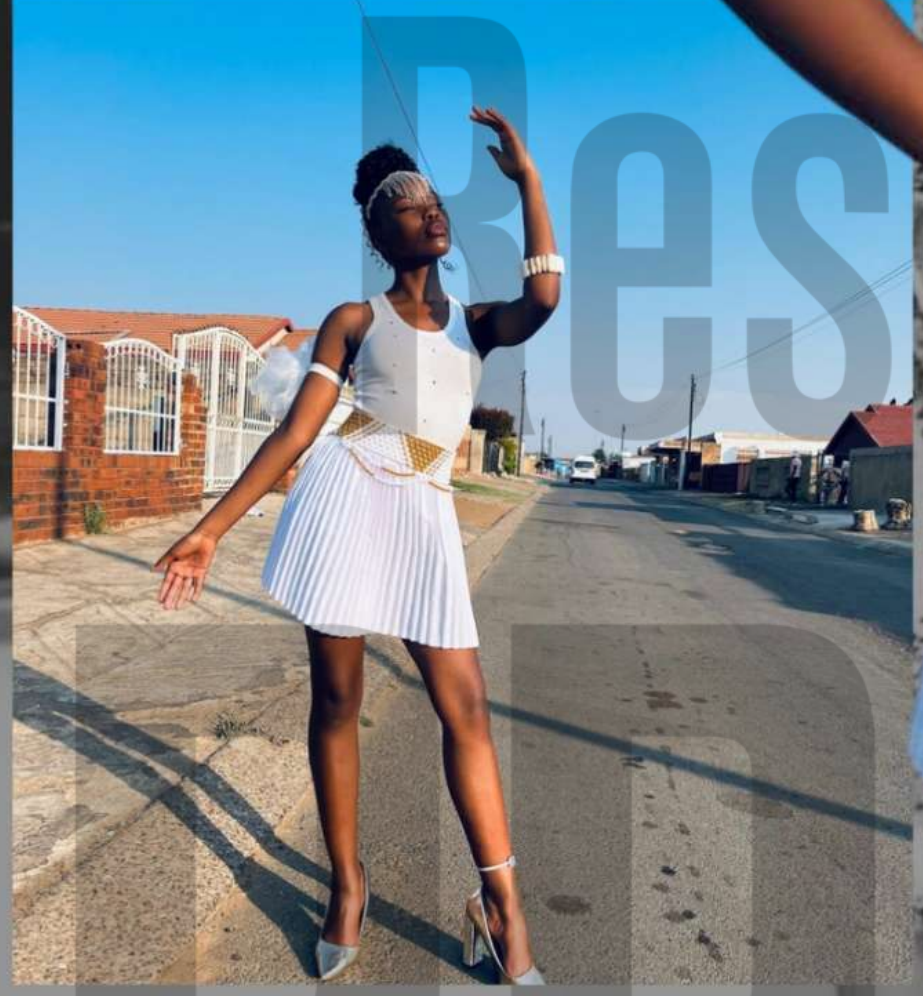

Ofentse Mosalemanee

#Finalist

Introducing Ofentse Mosalemane

Miss District High Schools 2026 Finalist

At just 17, Ofentse Faezo Mosalemane is already clear about who she is and what she stands for. A Grade 10 learner at Lukhanyo High School, Ofentse describes herself as someone who loves music, photography and public speaking. “Through my advocacy, I focus on empowering young voices,” Ofentse says. “I want to create a platform where children can find their voices, tell their stories and pursue their dreams without limitation.”

Ofentse did not hear about the Miss District High Schools competition through friends or social media. Instead, she says the title itself caught her attention. “Honestly, I never heard about the competition from anyone, but I was inspired by the title of the competition because it has a value related to school and academics,” Ofentse explains.

For her, it was about more than a crown. “It showcases how I can lead a good impact on my peers and mates, encouraging them about their interests, abilities and strength.”

Entering this year was a personal decision. “For the first time in my life, I’ve always wanted to participate in a reality pageant, not only beauty pageants,” Ofentse says. “I wanted to show my society my capability and inspire those who aspire.” She saw the competition as a space where she could prove that pageantry is not only about appearance, but about character and leadership.

Being named a finalist has brought mixed emotions. “It feels good and overwhelming at the same time,” Ofentse admits. She believes not everyone joins for the right reasons. “There are contestants who really are desperate to be in this competition, but some are just taking this journey lightly.

They’re here for followers, fans and fame.” Ofentse hopes the leadership of the competition will focus on values. “I highly doubt there will be a good title holder if the judges or the director do not take accountability for behaviour.” Preparation has been serious and focused. Ofentse attends practice classes with her coach and works hard on interviews and question-and-answer sessions. “I’ve been preparing myself for interviews and the way I’ve been holding up,” she says. She credits her support system for helping her stay ready. “My family and friends have been supportive, helping me with my rehearsals and listening to my ideas. So I can say I’m very ready and confident enough for this competition.”

The journey has surprised her in positive ways. “The most exciting part is that we’re not here for being beautiful, or the walk, the votes or even the outfits,” Ofentse explains. “We’re here to learn from one another.” She values communication and maturity among contestants. “We have good communication skills, and we address each other about certain problems without participating with feelings.”

Ofentse is quick to mention the people who stand behind her. “My family, friends and even my community are my biggest supporters,” she says proudly. “I am proud to be where I am because of my community, and proud to be who I am today because of my family.” She adds, “My friends never gave up on me. I sincerely thank all the people out there having faith in me and believing in me.”

Balancing school and competition life takes discipline. “Time management is the key,” Ofentse says. Her days are structured. “On a daily basis I have school. When I get home I do my homework and study while taking breaks. Before I sleep, I make sure I do at least one modelling activity, like watching motivational clips or working on my speech.” It is a routine she sticks to with determination.

When asked what qualities matter most in this role, Ofentse answers without hesitation. “It’s someone who’s confident and passionate, someone who’s not shy to express themselves in their community to inspire others,” she says. She adds that handling pressure and facing challenges are also important. She has faced her own obstacle. “I had stage fright,” Ofentse shares. Instead of letting fear win, she worked through it. “I practised relaxation techniques and kept pushing myself to get comfortable on stage. It really paid off.” For now, she says there has not been one single standout moment. “So far, so good. We’ve been in good blood with one another.”

If she wins, Ofentse wants her message to be clear. “I would tell each and every individual to believe in themselves, take a leap of faith and let the universe conspire to make their dreams a reality,” she says. She often reminds herself, “I am who they want to be, I am who they aspire to be, and I am to inspire those who aspire.”

Before events, she keeps her nerves in check by staying calm and friendly. “Be calm and be friendly with the interviewer or your audience,” Ofentse advises. “That helps a lot because you eventually feel like you’re used to doing it.”

No matter the outcome, Ofentse sees herself serving her community. “I see myself putting a hand within my society, helping my peers, older or even younger than me, fulfilling all the duties as possible while still managing school,” she says.

For other students dreaming of entering pageants, Ofentse offers simple advice. “Modelling is not just about being beautiful, the poses you strike or even the walk,” she says. “It’s about knowledge and understanding leadership, being a good example in your community.”

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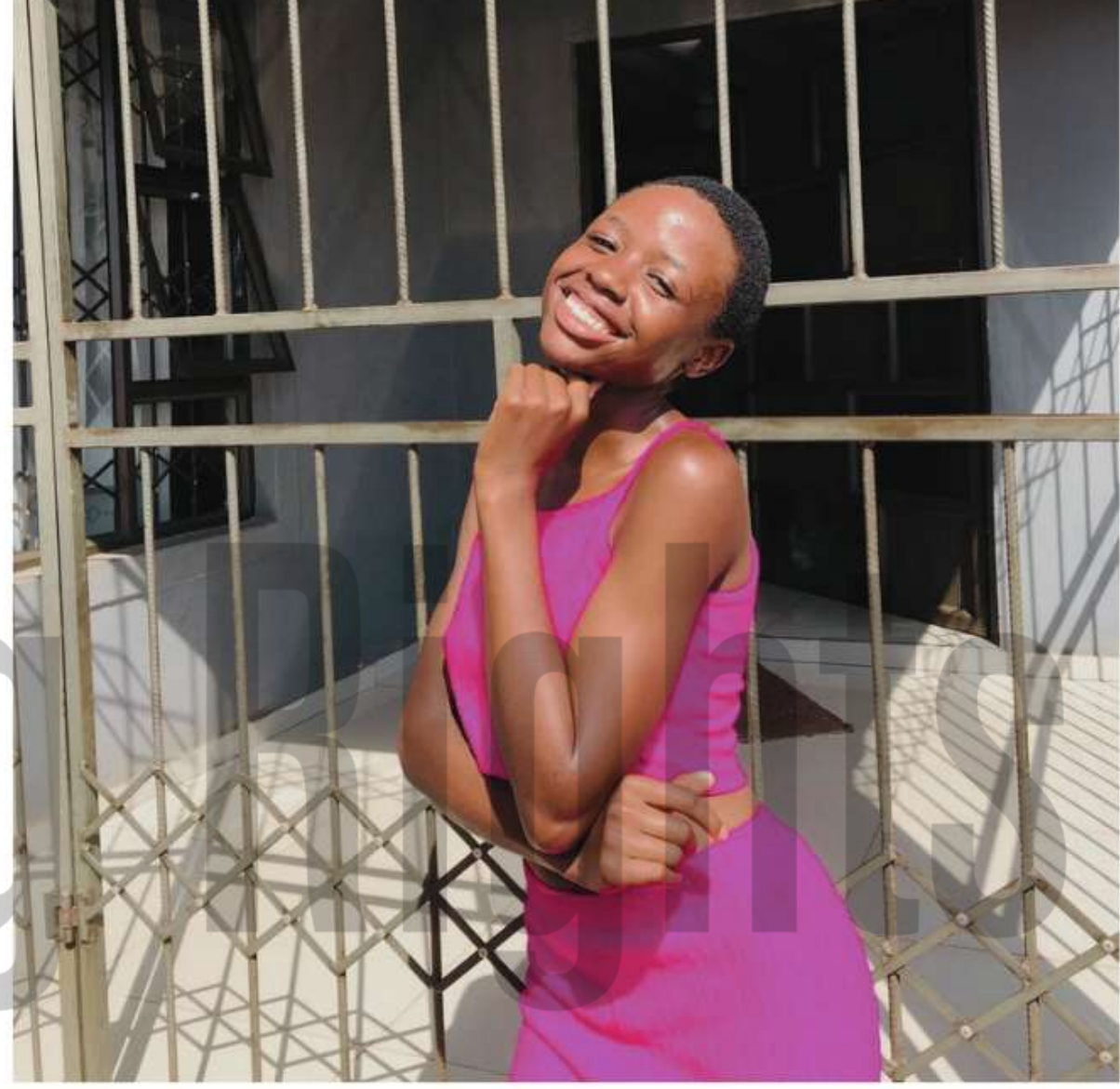
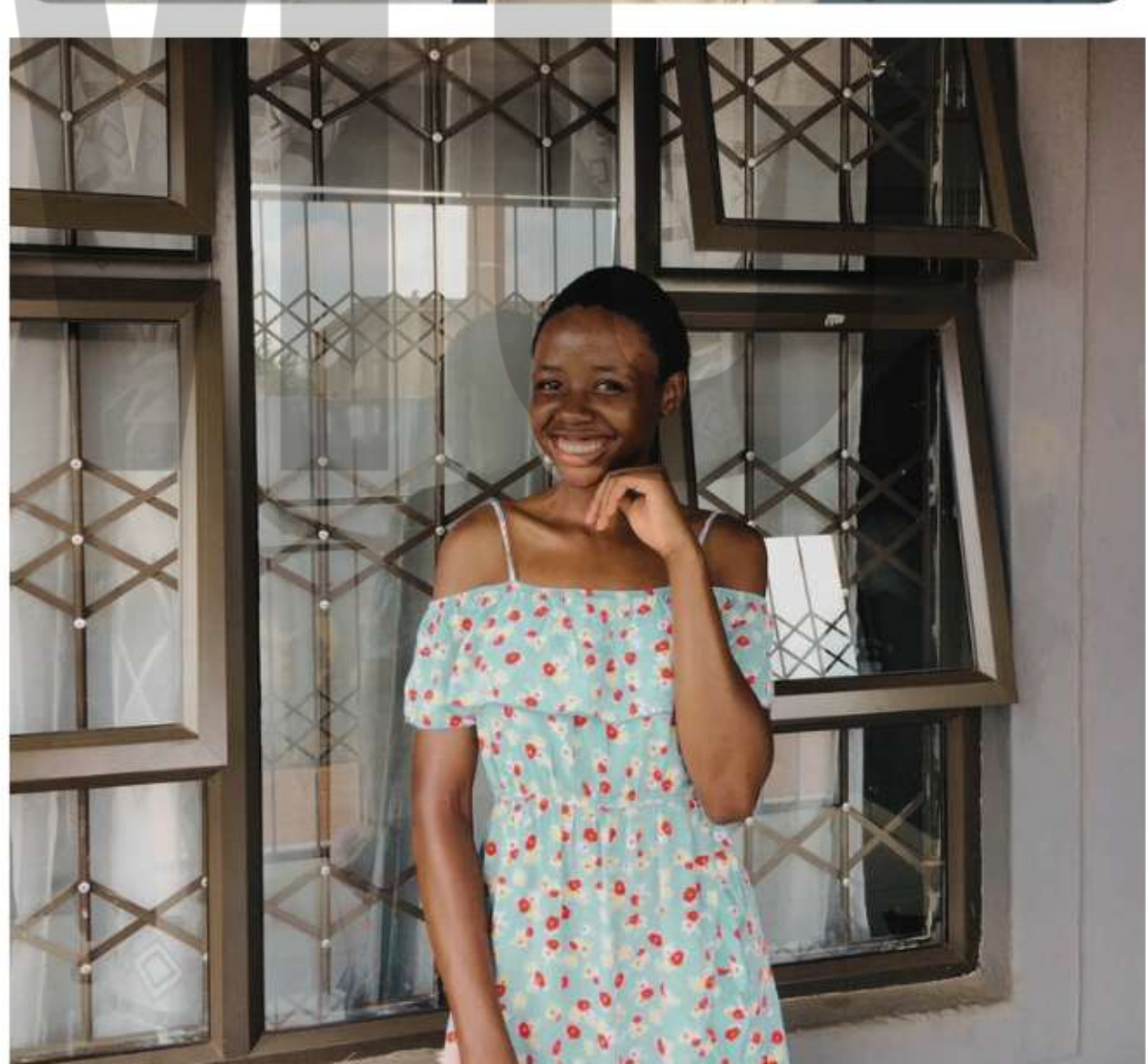


Hazel Gombiro



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#Finalist

Interview with Hazel Gombiro

Miss District High Schools 2026 Finalist

Hazel Gombiro, a 16-year-old Grade 10 learner at Retasetjhaba Secondary, is one of the finalists for Miss District High Schools 2026. Representing her school and community of Evaton North, Hazel brings energy, focus, and a passion for empowering young people to the competition.

"I first heard about this post on the 11th of February," Hazel says. "Someone shared it with me because they didn't want me to be left behind with pageant competitions. They said they think I am suitable for Miss District High Schools." That nudge inspired Hazel to enter, curious about what the pageant had to offer.

"The reason I decided to enter this competition is that I want to learn more about pageants," Hazel explains. "I want to learn new skills, new things, and experience more about pageants."

Being chosen as a finalist has been a motivating experience. "Being a finalist made me feel happy, and I am ready to face any challenges that I will have to face during this competition," she says. Hazel has already been hard at work preparing for the big day. "My preparation so far has been focused on my speech. I am busy learning new skills and researching things I don't understand about the competition."

She finds excitement in both the opportunities and experiences that come with being a finalist. "The most exciting part of this journey is that I am going to do a radio interview for free," Hazel shares. "Another thing is that I am going to learn new things. The competition is a free entry, and people are voting with a link, not with money."

Hazel credits her support system for keeping her motivated. "My biggest supporter is Sis Kahlego," she says. "She was the one who informed me about this competition. Without her, I wouldn't even know it existed. Whenever I need her, she is always there for me." Balancing schoolwork and competition activities is a skill Hazel has quickly mastered. "I first do my schoolwork, making sure everything is arranged and that I understand it," she explains. "When I'm done, I start practicing and checking my phone for any information for the day."

Hazel believes confidence is key to excelling in a pageant. "Important qualities for someone in this role are to be confident and believe in themselves," she says. "You should always tell yourself that you can do it." She admits that challenges have already come her way. "Selling tickets has been tough," Hazel says. "I think I will overcome this by asking people to buy tickets and also buying some myself to show that I tried my best."

When asked if any moment in the competition stands out so far, Hazel says, "Not yet, really, because I haven't stood out. I am going to stand out the day I step on stage feeling confident and proud of myself." If she wins, she wants to inspire others. "I would like to tell other contestants to always believe in themselves. This competition is not just about winning; it's about showing who you are," she explains.

Handling nerves is part of the process for Hazel. "I sit down, calm myself, and tell myself that I can do it no matter what," she says. Looking ahead, she is optimistic about the outcome. "After this competition, I see myself feeling proud that I did my best and showed my hard work, despite the results," she shares.

Her advice to aspiring contestants is simple and honest: "Respect others and make them feel welcomed. It's not just about winning. Not everyone starts doing their best; they learn over time. Confidence is needed because in pageants, it's all about confidence."

Hazel's calm determination, strong values, and dedication make her a finalist to watch. With her focus on self-confidence, learning, and inspiring others, she is poised to leave a lasting impression both on and off the stage.

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Miss District High Schools 2026 Finalist

ORATILE TSATSINYANE

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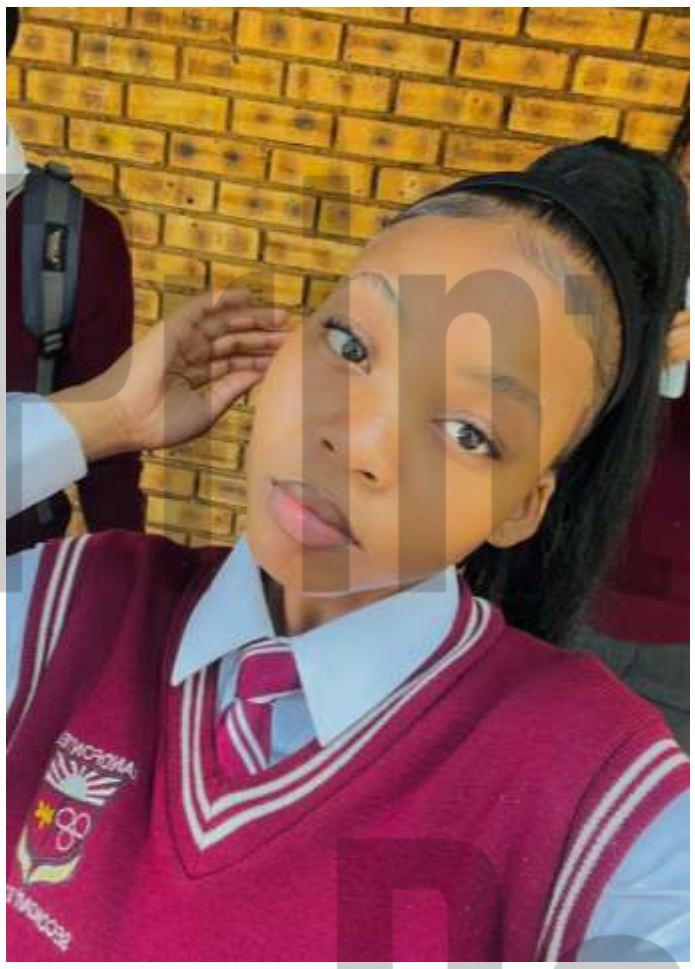
#Finalist

Introducing Oratile Tsatsinyane

Miss District High Schools 2026 Finalist



Oratile Tsatsinyane, a 16-year-old from Mogale Junction, is representing Randfontein Secondary School as a finalist in the Miss District High Schools 2026 competition. She is a model student with a love for fashion, art, and community service, and she is passionate about empowering young women in South Africa.

"I first heard about the competition through my school's announcements and social media pages," Oratile says. "They were promoting it as a great opportunity for learners to develop confidence, public speaking skills, and community involvement. I remember thinking it was something I'd love to be a part of, so I started looking into it more and speaking to some of the current title holders. It sounded like an amazing opportunity to grow and make a difference, so I decided to give it a shot."

When asked why she chose to enter this year, Oratile explains, "I've always been passionate about empowering young women and making a difference in my community. This competition seemed like the perfect platform to showcase my skills and passions, and I'm really glad I took the leap. It's been an incredible journey so far, and I'm loving every minute of it." Being a finalist has been an exciting experience. "It's still surreal," she admits. "Meeting the other talented girls and learning from them has been amazing. We're all so different, but we share the same drive and passion. We've had some great moments, like our group photoshoots and workshops, and it's been so much fun getting to know everyone."

Preparation for the competition has required dedication. "It's been a lot of work, but in a good way," Oratile says. "I've been working on pageant skills like poise and speechwriting, focusing on my community project, and taking dance and fitness classes to feel confident on stage. I've learned so much about myself and what I'm capable of."

The most exciting part of the journey has been bonding with the other finalists. "We're all supporting each other," she says. "It's incredible to see how talented and driven they are. I think we're going to stay friends long after the competition, and that's something special."

Oratile credits her family as her biggest supporters. "My mom has been my rock, always offering advice and encouragement. My friends have also been amazing, helping me practice speeches and cheering me on. I couldn't have done it without them."

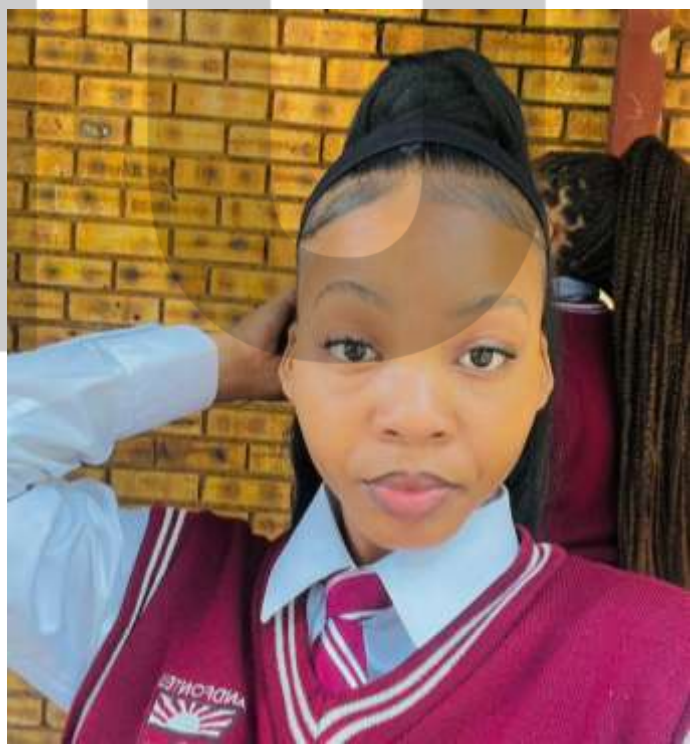
Balancing schoolwork and competition activities has been challenging, but Oratile has learned to manage her time effectively. "I make sure to do schoolwork first, then fit in competition activities around it. It's not always easy, but it's worth it. I've become more efficient and focused on what's important."

She believes confidence, empathy, and authenticity are crucial qualities for someone in this role. "You need to connect with people and inspire them. It's not just about looking good; it's about being a role model and making a difference. Thinking on your feet and being genuine take you far." Oratile has faced challenges along the way. "Overcoming self-doubt was tough, but talking to my friends and family helped me realize I'm not alone. I reminded myself why I started this journey—to challenge myself and grow—and that helped me push through." One of her highlights was being named a finalist. "That moment was amazing. It was such a shock, but it showed that all my hard work had paid off."

If she wins, Oratile hopes to raise awareness about mental health and promote self-love. "I want to inspire young people to be kind to themselves and seek help when needed. Using this platform to make a difference would mean so much."

To handle nerves, Oratile focuses on preparation and self-belief. "I take time to breathe and visualize myself doing well. Being nervous just shows that you care, and that's a good thing." Regardless of the outcome, Oratile has big plans. "I see myself pursuing a career in social work or education. I'm passionate about making a difference and excited to see where life takes me."

Her advice to others is simple: "Just go for it! Don't be afraid to try something new. You'll learn so much about yourself. Be yourself, ask for help when needed, and enjoy the journey. It's worth it." Oratile's passion, determination, and positivity shine through as she prepares to make her mark in the Miss District High Schools competition.



Preview

MAJESTIC PAGEANTS
SOUTH AFRICA

Miss , Mr, Mrs, Teen
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MAJESTIC SOUTH AFRICA

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